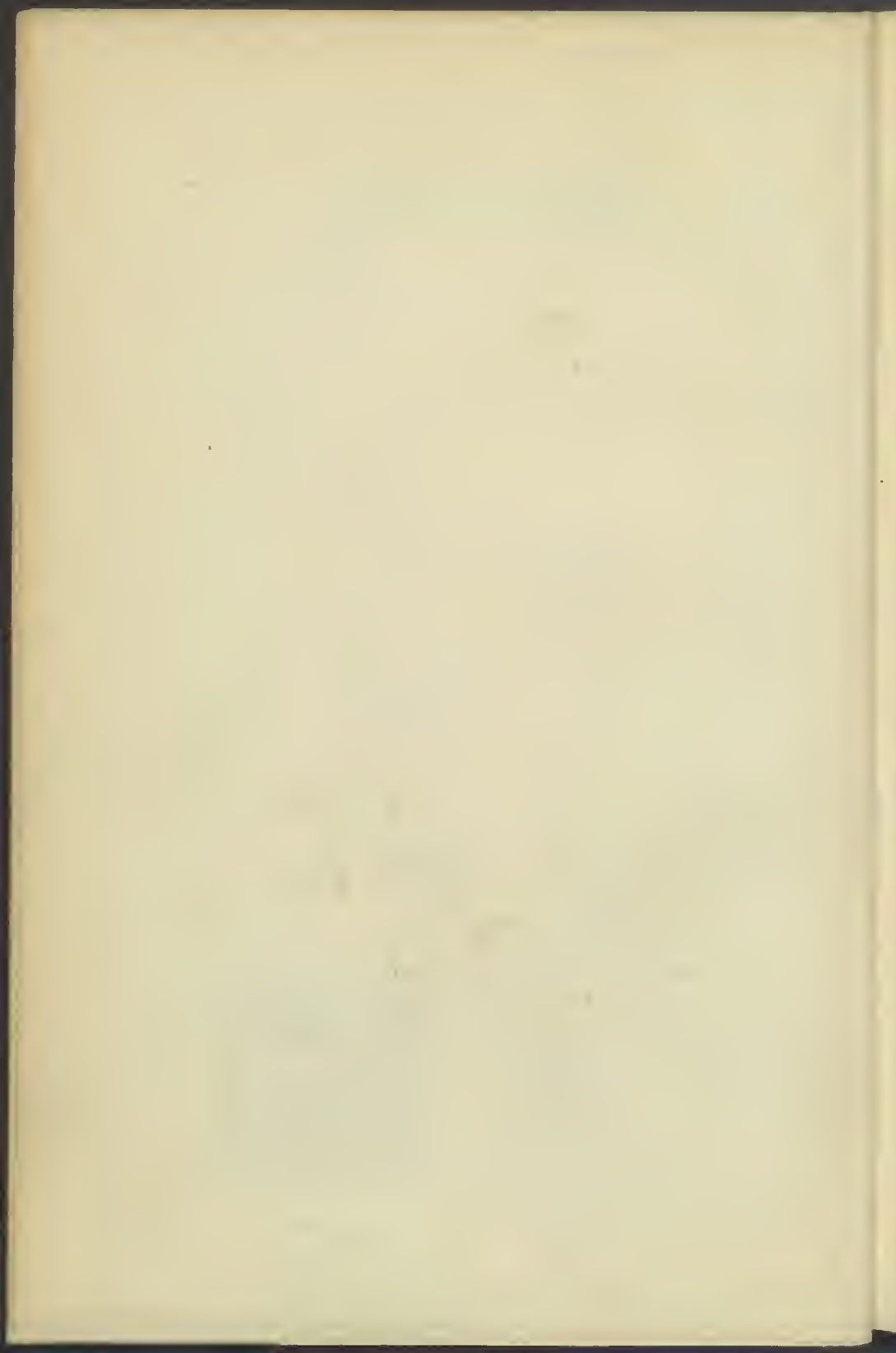


FROM PRESIDENT TO PRISON





FROM PRESIDENT TO PRISON

BY

FERDINAND OSSENDOWSKI

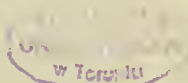
*Author of "Beasts, Men and Gods"; "Man and Mystery in Asia";
and "The Shadow of the Gloomy East"*

IN COLLABORATION WITH

LEWIS STANTON PALEN

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COLLABORATOR'S NOTE

A GAIN it has been my pleasure to assist Dr. Ossendowski in the textual preparation of a manuscript which contains material of unique appeal.

In this volume he gives an account of his personal experiences during the Russo-Japanese War and in the Revolution of 1905, as it affected the Far East, and offers what is probably the most intimate picture of the life of the Russian prisons in Siberia and Manchuria that has ever been drawn for the western world by one who has himself lived through the regime of these institutions.

By the medium of these experiences he presents a strong arraignment of the Tsar and his officials for the errors they committed in the handling of their own and their subject peoples, and admits us also to a most esoteric revelation of the psychology of prison life.

In his story we have likewise a fair epitome of the whole tragic history of that great body of Poles which has been forced to find its life under the dominating overlordship of the Tsars and which has constantly struggled toward the hope of a renewed existence of freedom. Though of no direct benefit to the movement in which he participated, his imprisonment produced unexpected results in another feature of Russian life. This was in the prisons themselves. For, as he indicates in the closing chapter of his text, he wrote a romance based upon his prison experiences, which contained such stirring material and was so strongly phrased that it at once brought down upon him the censure and renewed persecutions of the Russian Government. The volume was condemned and confiscated and proceedings

were instituted to secure his return to those very walls of which he had written so dramatically.

When the first edition was burned, he had a second brought out under a slightly different title and a copy of this placed on the desk of each member of the Duma just as it went on sale. The result was that these representatives of the people were so stirred by his presentation of the life within the prisons that they took the matter up in the Duma and finally forced the Government's hand to institute reforms in their administration. The principal changes which resulted were the segregation of the prisoners in such a way that only the most hardened and vicious criminals were thrown together in the large common cells; the provision of reasonable work for the inmates; the establishment of libraries and occasional talks for the men; and the emphasizing to the officials of the necessity for seeking to ameliorate the moral state of mind of the condemned.

As it was a uniquely significant result of his efforts on behalf of those unfortunate ones whom he had left behind within what he so picturesquely calls the "stone sack," so must it have been a tribute of peculiar appeal to Dr. Ossendowski, when he received an immense address carrying the signatures of many thousands of criminal prisoners, expressing a profound appreciation of his work for them, as well as those of the two eminent writers, Leo Tolstoi and W. Korolenko.

LEWIS STANTON PALEN.

LE BOUVERET, SWITZERLAND

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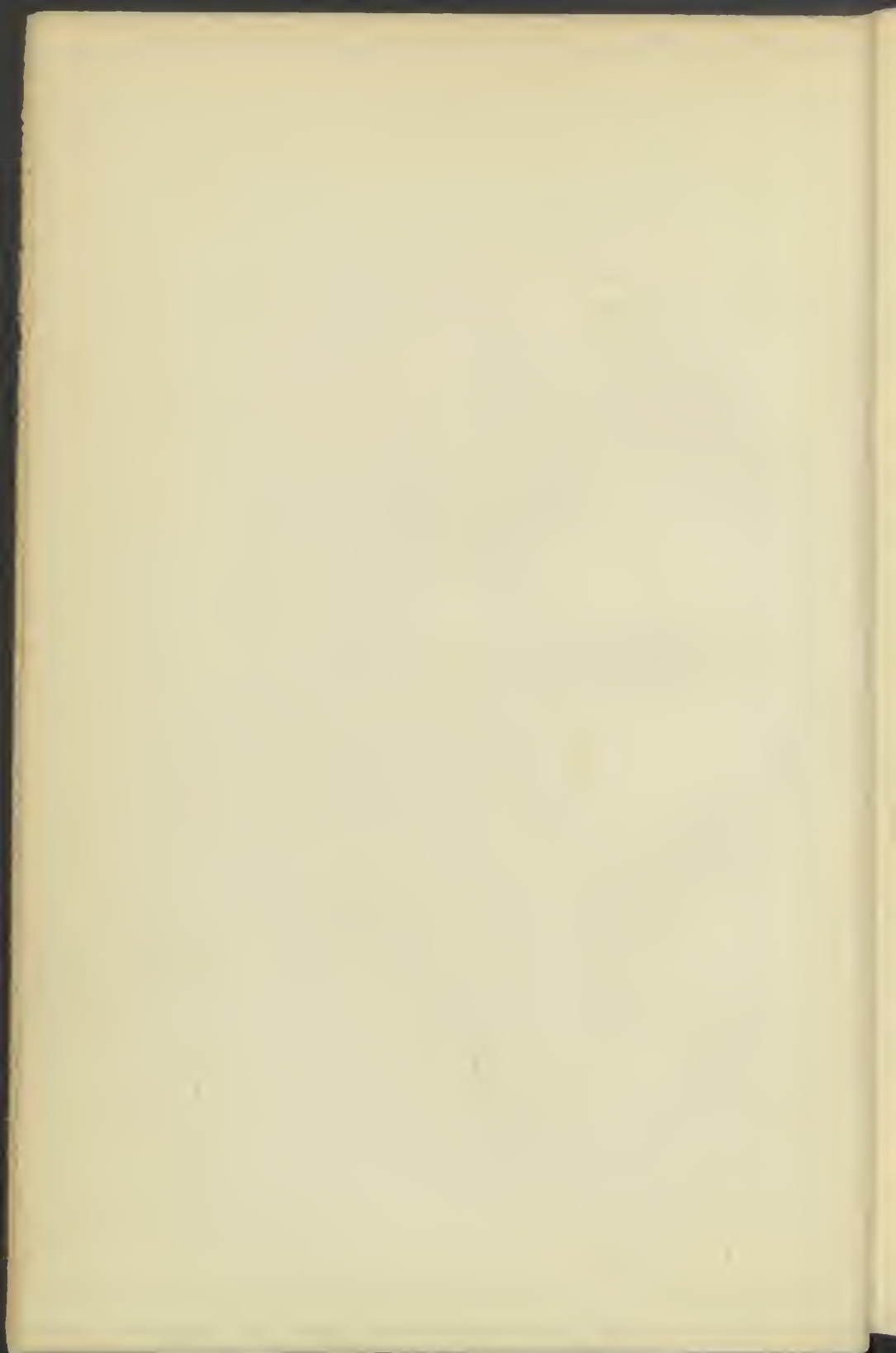
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PART I

THE GATHERING STORM



CHAPTER I

THE FIRST PETRELS

OUT across the cold stretches of Siberia toward the warming rays of the rising sun Russia for centuries pushed, like a great primitive giant, her bulwark of physical power, until finally it reached down to the very tip of a lovely forest-covered peninsula, where the towering range of the Sikhota Alin came down to bathe itself in the iridescent waters of the Pacific. Just where the mountain steps out of the sea the giant built his cairn, that should apprise all men of his extended might, and called the mass of masonry and stone Vladivostok, "Ruler of Eastern Empire."

Later time softened somewhat his ways and, as his people came to do his will and live their little lives of frontier abandon and joy, they called their capital "The Pearl of the East," a name it full deserved before man's hand wrenched loose the covering shell of never-changing solitude.

The peninsula, that it might be entered in the printed annals of the world, was designated Muravieff-Amursky, and the waters which washed its eastern and western shores took their surnames from the two great rivers of the region and became known as the Ussuri Bay and Amur Bay. They are but the fingers of the sea, a part of the hand geographers call the Bay of Peter the Great, on that arm of the ocean they have christened the Japan Sea.

At the very tip of the peninsula, where the small Golden Horn has driven its way into the land, Vladivostok has spread itself over the western shore of this little bay and occupied also a part of the eastern littoral, known as

Egersheld. There, overhung by mountain summits covered with oak forests, that were denized by pheasants, hares and raccoons instead of the princely tigers which had gone out of residence some fifteen years before, Vladivostok was climbing the terraced hillsides in the year 1903, when I arrived for the first time in this centre of Oriental power.

The population of the town counted a heterogeneous conglomerate of Russians, Chinese, Japanese and Koreans with a small admixture of Europeans.

In a building belonging to the railway administration I organized my laboratory and at once set to work. In an earlier volume, *Man and Mystery in Asia*, I have described some of the outstanding features of the life of Vladivostok, some of my wanderings and a few of the more important of my undertakings in the surrounding country. In December of 1903, while I was engaged in a study of the coal samples I had collected during my several expeditions, events were developing in the Far East that were fraught with a deep significance and furnished much food for thought.

It is a matter of common historical knowledge that the seriousness and significance of these events had their inception in the securing by the Russians of a timber concession on the upper reaches of the Yalu River, which forms the north-western boundary of Korea along its Manchurian frontier. In Vladivostok it was whispered that the principal concessionaire was Bezobrazoff, Master of the Hunt to the Tsar, who was known to have at this time a powerful influence in the shaping of Russian politics. At the same time it was said that the Minister of Finance, Count Witte, opposed Bezobrazoff's policy and actions in the matter of the Yalu, but was forced to give way, as some of the members of the Romanoff family were among the stockholders of the concession.

Vladivostok, with its close proximity to the Tumen River that forms the north-eastern boundary of Korea, was usually well informed as to what was going on in this

decadent state, which for centuries past has been oppressed and dominated by the Chinese and Japanese and at one time even by the northern Tungutzes. We learned soon of the great concern and growing agitation of the Japanese, who saw in the concession on the Yalu the entering wedge of the Russian plan to annex Korea, just as the Muscovite power, after having obtained the concession for the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway through Manchuria, had succeeded in practically dominating in its entirety the northern province of Heilungkiang and partially the two southern ones of Kirin and Fengtien.

These fears gave Japan the excuse for sending armed detachments to the Yalu Valley to protest against and prevent what they maintained would be a violation of Korean territory by the owners of the concession. In the summer of 1903, the first encounter took place and gave a clue to the whole situation. A Russian naval vessel under command of Lieutenant Kartseff, a relative of some of the palace aristocracy, sailed from Port Arthur, the then naval base of Russia in South Manchuria, eastward across Korea Bay for the mouth of the Yalu, carrying timber estimators, surveyors and a band of workmen composed chiefly of Cossacks from the Amur and Ussuri regions. When a Japanese patrol sought to prevent their landing on the Korean littoral, Kartseff ordered his crew to repulse the Japanese without the use of firearms and thus opened the initial move in the first great land conflict between a European and an Asiatic power. The Japanese were beaten and for some time quiet prevailed.

But it was only a seeming quiet. The mysterious expression on the faces of the Japanese in Vladivostok, their meetings and parleys with the Chinese and Koreans, the bellicose tone of the Japanese Press and, especially, the activities of the Russian authorities, all indicated that war was near.

The first of the storm petrels was Bezobrazoff on his inspecting visit to the Chinese Eastern Railway, Port Arthur,

Dalny and Vladivostok. The Master of the Hunt had many conferences with the military authorities in the Far East and with the railway engineers, leaving behind him, as he turned back westward to St. Petersburg, the impression of a threatening mystery.

Then we had the visit of the second distinguished envoy of the Government, the Minister of Finance, Count Witte. After his return to the capital we learned that he strongly represented to the Tsar the very evident danger of an armed conflict with Japan in the alien territory of Manchuria, with only a single-track railway line of great length for the transportation of all troops and war materials and with the organization of the Imperial Government activities in the Far East not yet completed.

And finally the Minister of War, General A. N. Kuropatkin, arrived. After visiting the military bases at Port Arthur and Vladivostok, he boarded the cruiser *Askold* and sailed for Japan, where the high authorities received him very amiably and most willingly showed him their army and fleet. He was so completely reassured by what he saw that he returned to Vladivostok buoyant and full of hope and, when cheered by the sailors as he mounted to the bridge of the flagship, pointed toward the island of the Rising Sun and exclaimed :

“ We shall soon be there, boys ! ”

Back in St. Petersburg, General Kuropatkin opposed energetically the fears of the cautious Witte and threw his support behind the plans of empire being urged by Bezobrazoff. The War Minister had no idea of the existence in Japan of the powerful new Shimose powder and was blissfully ignorant of the fact that a gigantic scene from an *opéra bouffe* had been staged for him, when the Japanese marched past him an army clad in the earlier feudal Japanese uniforms and displayed to him a navy of old ships that looked as though they could not leave the docks.

After the departure of Kuropatkin from Vladivostok, the word “ war ” never left the lips of the inhabitants of the

town and a mysterious, sarcastic smile seemed glued to the usually enigmatic faces of the Japanese residents. This smile was worn alike by barbers, tailors, bootmakers, merchants and laundresses, because they all shared the indomitable certainty of their leaders that the flag of the Rising Sun would fall neither on the land nor on the sea. They knew the real facts, as most of them were military spies and had minute information about the equipment and spirit of their army, which was thoroughly trained and understood to a man the aims of the coming war.

As I was hunting from time to time on the peninsula of Muravieff-Amursky or was visiting some of the neighbouring coal-mines, I often emerged from the forest and came out on the shores of either the Ussuri or Amur Bay. These shores were almost uninhabited, with only an occasional Chinese or Korean fishing hamlet isolated here and there. Back of these the *taiga* remained virgin and difficult to traverse without an axe or a heavy hunting knife. These bays enclosing the peninsula were rarely visited except by occasional big junks, arriving with cargoes of dried fish, seaweed, crabs or smuggled goods. Once a year, however, the Ussuri Bay was thrown into unwonted contrast to its usual tranquillity by the visit of men-o'-war coming here for gunnery and torpedo practice. At such times the junks and fishing-boats of the yellow seamen deserted the bay as though it were a place possessed, to return and set up ownership again, however, the moment the fleet has left.

After the departure of the Minister of War great changes took place in both bays. Russian torpedo-boats and scout ships frequently cruised these waters, while the Chinese and Korean three-masted junks with their ribbed and wrinkled sails almost never visited them, fearing encounters with the men-o'-war.

One day in the autumn of 1904, when I was hunting heath-cock, I came out on the shore of Ussuri Bay and was witness to a very interesting and significant occurrence.

The sun was already sinking behind the forest-covered mountains across the bay. Pink and golden traces of evening's blush still lingered on the surface of the sea. Suddenly a strange-looking ship appeared from behind a small headland. The whole craft, from the water-line to half-way up her masts, was loaded with, and enveloped by, bales of hay and bundles of kaoliang stalks (Chinese sorghum). But my attention was caught by the masts and their equipment, which were a bit too rakish to fit into the lines of a native craft and looked as though they were certainly stayed with cables.

"A disguised torpedo-boat?" I queried to myself, and sat me down for a careful observation of the strange craft. She was making very slow headway with two small sails clumsily rigged to her masts in a way that no real sailor would ever have set them in the open sea.

My growing suspicions were suddenly confirmed, when a light flared, went out and flared again from between the bales of hay. I had no doubt that it was regular signalling that was going on, but found it to be of a rather unusual nature, as it looked as though it were done by means of a small electric flashlight. I began to scan the shore very carefully and soon made out answering signals at about a thousand paces from me. While I watched, the sun had disappeared altogether, dusk was falling and a fog came slowly rolling in from the sea. Then, peering through the gathering darkness, I saw the bales of hay and the bundles of kaoliang stalks go overboard into the water, and gradually made out the lines of the funnels, the bridge and the guns as the lights, to my surprise, began showing through the port-holes. By this time I was naturally glued to my observation post and gradually saw the smoke from the reviving fires pouring out of the funnels in a red glare. I had already been there some hours when I heard the dull, slow churning of the screw, followed by the splash of the oars of a small boat that put into shore not far from the steep bank where I crouched among the bushes. I caught

some broken words of command, uttered in the Japanese tongue.

"War!" I thought. "The war is already upon Russia!"

Afterwards more than once, in wild and isolated places, I came across Japanese, Chinese and Koreans sending signals and, throughout these days, developed the very distinct feeling that this largest fortress in the Far East, and the whole place of so much strategic importance to Russia, were surrounded by a net of spies, and that the hostile and piercing eyes of men with yellow faces looked out from everywhere.

Then in December the news that the Japanese torpedo-boats had attacked the Russian fleet, by bad strategy huddled together in the harbour at Port Arthur, quickly spread through the Russian Far East and shocked with incredulity the previously invulnerable confidence of Vladivostok. After solemn services in the churches and the publication of the manifesto of the Tsar, proclaiming a state of war, the populace, roused by the unexpected attack of the Japanese, each day became more warlike.

"We shall smother with our caps these yellow rascals!" was the boastful cry of the streets, of the theatres and even in the homes. Threats of unquestioned revenge were bandied about, while all occupations gave way to the one principal pastime of waiting for and devouring the news from the war area.

After a period of calm, events took an unexpected turn, when the defeat of the Russian armies of the peninsula of Liaotung forced their retreat to the north and their subsequent abandonment of Port Arthur to the siege of the Japanese forces. The story of the dramatic siege and the capture by the Mikado's storming troops of this southernmost stronghold of Russia in the Orient is well known. Its fall left the Japanese General Staff free to land its armies on the southern littoral of Manchuria without fear or interference.

In the meantime another disastrous land engagement

had taken place just opposite Wiju on the Yalu River, along the course of which Bezobrazoff and his Imperial associates had dreamed of planting a new outpost of Russian empire in the Far East. Following this unhappy battle at Wiju and Chiu Lien Ch'eng, the Russian arms sustained one disaster after the other.

The unfortunately well-proven Russian negligence and lack of conscientious care in details was patently manifest during these initial operations of the war. Since 1900 military topographers had been working on a map of Manchuria, but, not knowing the language of the country, they fell into unpardonable errors, which later brought heavy nemesis in lives and treasure.

One of their most flagrant blunders came about in this way. An officer with some soldiers would be studying a given territory and, wishing to place a village on his map, would ask one of the inhabitants for its name.

"*Pu tung te* (I do not understand)," came the answer of the Chinese or the Manchu, both of whom spoke the Mandarin Chinese in this district.

The officer would then mark on his map the village Putungte. This occurred so many times that, as a result, the Russian military map of Manchuria was covered with a net of villages and hamlets all bearing the same name of Putungte, which formed an unintelligible labyrinth from which the Russian military leaders could not disentangle themselves to the very end of the war; and Generals Gripenberg, Kuropatkin, Stackelberg and other lesser commanders paid a heavy price for this negligence and through this ignorance of the country contributed another step in the loss of Russian prestige before the Eastern peoples. The defeat of the Russian arms which resulted from this and similar avoidable acts of carelessness in the preparation and execution of their military plans brought about the first great downfall of the white race after the threatened militant awakening of Asia.

At the beginning of the war the Commander of the fortress

of Vladivostok, General Voronetz, invited a number of the town's residents to visit the forts upon which fell the defence of the extreme eastern frontiers of the Empire from the attacks of Japan. Over the ice of the frozen Golden Horn our party was conducted to Russian Island, where the military engineers had located the strongest fortifications designed to protect the city from the side dominated by the Bay of Peter the Great and Ussuri Bay. On the side washed by Amur Bay the city was guarded by forts built between the town and the mouth of First River.

The fortifications were shown us very superficially. We saw the exterior of massive walls, cement cupolas and apertures, from some of which projected guns of heavy calibre. General Voronetz and his aides made much of these forts and expressed the certainty that they would play an important part in the war.

Some months later, when I was in Manchuria, I returned to Vladivostok on an official errand and at that time I realized clearly why the authorities had permitted only a superficial inspection of the forts. The *dénouement* came to me through the arrival of a detachment of Japanese cruisers under command of Admiral Uriu, which approached Vladivostok from the Ussuri Bay side and with impunity dropped some shells into the Golden Horn, without being damaged or even interfered with by the Russian Island forts. Afterwards it was explained that the plans of defence were still incomplete and that the heavy pieces had not yet been placed in position.

It is easy for those who lived close to the actual events of this war to realize that the Russian Government and its local military and civil authorities prepared with their own hands the immense national disaster in Manchuria and that the *punition* which came some years later in the guise of the Bolshevik Revolution was deservedly earned by the Government circles—a punishment that fell, however, much more heavily on the nation as a whole, innocent as it was of the crimes of the Government.

CHAPTER II

RUMBLINGS AND DISASTER

SOON after my visit to the fortress a proposal had been made to me that I organize at Harbin a central laboratory for the military area, where I was to work not only for the Chinese Eastern and the Ussuri railways, but directly for the General Staff of the army. My first and principal occupation was to be a thorough study of the supply of raw materials in the country, with the object of recommending and starting local manufacturing undertakings which would help to relieve the single, long line of railway from the transportation of similar products, and thus augment its powers for carrying troops and war munitions. It was palpably foolish to be transporting over from four to six thousand miles of railway these supplies and goods which could be produced locally, at a time when the military exigencies demanded an ever-increasing rail capacity for men and materials.

At the very outset there were important economic questions referred to me by the Headquarters Staff and by the administration of the Chinese Eastern Railway. To confirm my theoretical deductions I needed a laboratory and, therefore, had to make a flying trip to St. Petersburg to select and secure the necessary supplies and equipment.

I reached the capital just at the moment of the birth of the Revolution of 1905. As I was intimately familiar with all layers of society in this capital of the Tsars, where I had been in school and through the University, I soon had a close and accurate knowledge of what was developing.

I had no doubt that a revolution was brewing, but a partial revolution, a restricted one, primarily initiated and activated by the liberal *intelligentsia* and secondarily supported by the socialistic groups, which profited by every national and political difficulty to agitate or to assist revolutionary movements.

The war disaster had proved the criminal negligence of the Government, which only maintained itself through the support of the secret police and the sternly disciplined army with the help of which it crushed all protests against incapable Ministers and provincial governors, who had been guilty of crimes or excesses that exasperated the people.

It is possible that this revolution, even without the participation and help of the hundred million of Russia's peasants, might have yielded some beneficial and lasting results, if it had not been for the secret police. This organization had its spies everywhere, many of whom simulated liberal ideas and thus worked themselves into the councils of the revolutionists, even at times assuming leadership and provoking encounters with the army that only entailed most severe repression on the part of the Government. During these encounters many revolutionists were killed, while the leaders in the movement were arrested by the police on identification by the spies. Then the tribunals, always handy tools of the despotic Government, sentenced them to death, to long years of banishment in Siberia or to prison.

In the Revolution of 1905 this activity of the political secret police, or *okhrana*, was particularly effective. Two of its agents, Azeff and another, insinuated themselves into and acquired great influence in, the revolutionary centres of the *intelligentsia*, while the orthodox priest Gapon attained similar influence and position among the working people. As the first two succeeded, without attracting suspicion to themselves, in delivering to the police the most dangerous revolutionary leaders among the educated classes, Gapon for his part so manipulated and shaped

the whole course of the movement in St. Petersburg that he brought about an armed encounter that was predestined to failure.

Working in accord and conjunction with General Trepoff, the Commander of the forces of the capital, he organized and headed on January 9, 1905, a patriotic procession to the Place in front of the Tsar's Palace to petition their little Father.

I was in St. Petersburg at this time and was an eyewitness to a large part of the tragedy. Thousands of workers from the factories, students and members of the *intelligentsia* flowed through the streets, gradually forming themselves into columns which finally united in one immense procession, that advanced slowly and majestically along the great Nevsky Prospect, the principal street of the capital. At the very head of the procession was Gapon, robed in the full vestments of the Greek Church and bearing a golden cross in his hands. Following him were borne ikons of the Saints and pictures of the Tsar and Tsarina. The moving mass sang patriotic songs or chanted prayers, giving evidence of deep conviction and reverence and everywhere observing an impressive restraint and order.

As the great stream flowed along the Nevsky, it divided on reaching the cross streets of Morska and Admiralty and poured through them out upon Alexander Place, where through the freezing mist loomed the dark form of the Winter Palace of the Tsars. A paper was brandished in the hand of Gapon. It was the people's petition to the head of the Romanoffs, demanding that he call together representatives of the people to take part in the Government, basing their plea upon the assertion that only a constitutional form of government would be able to save the State from disaster in the war, from infamy and from dissolution.

At the opposite end of the Place some battalions of the Guards were drawn up ready for action. The crowd,

peaceably minded, was taken back by the display of force and remained silent, while Gapon led a little group of citizens toward the Palace to request the guard to present the petition of the people to the Tsar. Suddenly and without warning the soldiers loosed a volley over the heads of the crowd, so that the bullets began whistling through the frozen, snow-covered branches of Alexander Park and resounding dully against the houses and on the magnificent colonnade and marble façade of St. Isaac's Cathedral. The idealistic leaders of the movement had, of course, no notion that General Trepoff in his secret order to the garrison had written :

"Do not spare cartridges on the 9th of January."

The crowd broke and made for safety ; but with those in the rear of the moving mass still pressing forward in ignorance of what was happening in the Place, it compressed at first into a great vortex of human beings, mad with fear, and in imminent danger of having life crushed out. Then, seized with panic, it scattered in all directions and many of its units, without arms and without any real knowledge of what they were doing, ran, howling with fear, right upon the soldiers. The sabres of the officers flashed and volley after volley began to tear the heavy frozen air, actually filled with the clouds of vapour that rose from the great mass of citizens, who had come to present their appeal to their Father, the Tsar.

The snow was decked with the red flowers of blood and spotted everywhere with the dark bodies of the killed and the wounded, many of the latter, as they tried to rise, being knocked down and trampled to death by the merciless fear of their fleeing companions.

The shooting lasted for a considerable time, ending only when the two streets which had poured their human streams upon the Square were empty and still. The Place before the Palace of the Tsar, this Tsar who began all his manifests with the words : "My beloved people," presented a sad and terrible appearance. Heaps of bodies lay everywhere,

among them not only men but women and children as well, who had also come to petition their adored monarch for the happiness and honour of the country.

At the opposite end of the Place, General Trepoff made a speech to his faithful battalions, thanking them in the name of their ruler for the service they had performed, while the crowds of *intelligentsia*, students and workers, frightened, bewildered and each moment more excited, broke up into little groups and dispersed into the different parts of the city.

On the evening of this fateful day barricades were constructed in the streets of St. Petersburg, and during the whole night and through the two following days the scattered and irregular shooting of the revolutionists answered the loud volleys of the soldiers of the Guard. All factory hands went on strike; the street cars, the railways, the post and even some of the Government offices did not function.

But no one saw Gapon anywhere on the barricades. He disappeared without a trace, and only later did it leak out that he was a paid agent of the secret police and as such had brought the Revolution to a disastrous head in this incredible manner. After his treacherous act the ranks of the idealistic revolutionaries were rapidly depleted by the gallows, by the activities of the penal detachments under Generals Min, Rennenkampf and Trepoff and by the sentences of the Russian tribunals, prostrating justice before subservience to the orders of the Government authorities, which peopled Siberia and the prisons with these new victims of the crimes and violence of the Tsar's Government.

Gapon, however, did not escape real justice. The revolutionists ran him to earth, seized him and hung him in a solitary house in the outskirts of the little town of Terioki in Finland. Engineer Rutenberg was his executioner.

The news of the massacre of the peaceable petitioners

by the Guard of the Tsar spread over all the great immense spaces of Russia, reaching Poland, Pamir and the Pacific. The indignation and despair of the intelligent layers of society had no limits. The peasants, however, remained indifferent. Following the January massacre, the scum of the Russian towns took a vigorous part in the movement against the revolutionary centres of activity, receiving from the police money and orders to destroy the "hydra of revolution." In many of the towns and cities murders of cultured people and of non-Russian citizens began to occur. This scum of mankind, schooled by the horrors of the Russian prisons, under the pay and protection of the secret police killed with impunity those who were considered dangerous for the Government of the White Tsar, Nicholas II, just as in later years they slew the enemies of the Government of the Red Tsars, Lenin and Trotzky, robbed people and destroyed whole sections of towns that were inhabited by Poles, Tartars, Armenians and Jews. It was the period of the *pogroms* of terrible memory. "*Pogrom*" is the Russian word for thunder—and those who lived through it will long remember this period when there rolled through the land the thunder that gave over to former prisoners and criminals whole towns of those marked for persecution to the plunder of these men with the silent permission of the local authorities and of the Central Government. Under such lashes the demands for a constitution and for the removal of criminals from high posts in the Government increased in volume and extent.

On January 10th I walked from my hotel to the Nevsky Prospect. Crowds of people thronged the sidewalks. Though there was a distinct feeling of restlessness and agitation in the air, nothing gave indication of any reason for, or expectation of, trouble. I was even surprised that so few policemen were in the streets—an unusual thing in the capital. While pondering over this, I was just arriving at the Catholic Church of St. Catherine, when I

noticed the people in front of me stop suddenly for a moment and then in panic scatter and run to the other sidewalk or start down the middle of the street with shouts and cries. Even yet I did not understand what it was all about until, a little way up the Prospect, I saw a line of soldiers hurrying out to form a double rank across the street from house to house. The next thing I knew, two volleys came ringing down the Prospect. Without a sound a woman dressed in mourning twisted into a ball and lay still on the ground; a man with bulging and startled eyes ran past me, pressing his bleeding head with his hands; and a schoolboy with his books limped into a side street, crying with pain. Only a few steps in front of me a little girl with a basket swayed and fell on her back. Rolls scattered out of her basket. To this day I remember seeing one of them roll into a little pool of blood on the pavement and stick there.

When I regained conscious control of myself, which had been momentarily lost through the shock of the volleys and the cries of the wounded, I found myself alone on the sidewalk. Though the shooting had temporarily ceased, I flattened myself against the nearest house and began my retreat. Soon I had rounded the corner and was for the moment safe. From the hiding-place which I had found and in which I waited immediate developments, I heard new volleys that were being fired from the tower of the City Hall and in the neighbourhood of the Anichkoff Palace. A little later the Nevsky Prospect looked deserted and dead. Then the police appeared, quickly removed the bodies of the slain and covered the pools of blood with yellow sand, while patrols took up their stations at the corners of the streets. From time to time shots were heard and the shrieking bullets wailed their dirge off in the direction of the monument of Alexander III. In this drastic manner the authorities checked all traffic on the great artery of the capital and with such lessons taught the public not to congregate.

Thirteen years later in this same capital, with its name changed to Petrograd, I was again witness during the Revolutionary terror in 1917 and 1918 to similar scenes. In the same manner soldiers suddenly appeared and shot down the people, but with only this difference, that during the rule of the Tsar such a thing occurred only once, while during Bolshevik days it occurred so frequently that people became quite accustomed to it. When leaving the house, one would ask :

"Can one use the Nevsky Prospect to-day? Are they shooting?"

"Of course they are," was the answer frequently received.

"But you can pass, because to-day they are shooting along the left side of the street only, so that you can travel on the right."

This was, is and surely will continue to be for a long time still the manner of the authorities in dealing with the people, whom they have always regarded merely as cattle without rights and accustomed to most monstrous measures of repression. Watchwords have changed but the system of government has remained the same. It is illegality and violence. The Russians learned this terrible method, as they groaned for three hundred years under the yoke of the descendants of Jenghiz Khan, these Tartar conquerors who held a bloody hand over the immense state whose bournes they did not rightly know.

During the early period of the outbreak in St. Petersburg my business compelled me to go to Warsaw for a few days. The Revolution reached here very soon.

Poland, ruthlessly partitioned one hundred and fifty years ago by Russia, Austria and Prussia, suffered most in Warsaw because of the violence of the St. Petersburg overlordship. The reflection of this was often seen in the European Press, where violent comment and protests were made against the *pogroms* or wholesale massacres of the Jews. Yet no one raised his voice against the continuing martyrdom of Poland. From time to time the secret

police in the Warsaw fortress hung or shot hundreds of Poles who dared to raise their voices in protest against the lawlessness of the Russian authorities, these men who closed the churches and Polish schools, forbade under pain of imprisonment the use of the mother tongue, persecuted Polish writers, scholars, the Press and educated people generally and sent whole crowds of Poles under that fatal escort to banishment in Siberia.

When the news of this Revolution of 1905 reached Warsaw, many Poles immediately joined in the demand for a constitution, adding to it a petition for the autonomy of Poland. Terror was the Russian answer—arrest, imprisonment, banishment to Siberia and the death sentence for thousands of the Polish nation. When three Poles assembled, the police called it “a crowd of revolutionists” and shot at them. Loud talk or a peal of laughter was considered a revolutionary symptom and sufficient grounds for punishment.

On my arrival in Warsaw I went to stay in the Hotel Bristol in Krakowskie Przedmiescie Street. I went out about eleven o'clock the first morning and found that the usually gay and animated city wore a strange appearance. Shops, restaurants and cafés were closed; no street cars were moving, but the thoroughfares were thronged with people. It was as if the whole population were out of doors, moving up and down in silence and seemingly peaceable.

Suddenly from the direction of the Zamek, the old Palace of the Polish Kings, resounded cries and the thud of horses' hoofs. I turned and caught the stirring, foreboding sight of a detachment of hussars in battle formation, coming at full gallop down the street. The curved sabres glistened in the cold air, while the breath of the horses and men seemed to frame the group in a cloud of steam. The horsemen galloped along the sidewalks, crushing some and riding others off into the street. Above it all the sharp blows with the flat of the sabres and the awful curses

of the soldiers were heard. When the whole crowd had been driven to the middle of the Krakowskie Przedmiescie, a second detachment of cavalry swung in from a back street and fell on the public with drawn sabres. People ran everywhere, climbed lamp-posts, rushed from one side of the street to the other, were jostled and trampled by the horses and beaten by the soldiers.

I could not disentangle myself from the mass, which surrounded me and surged madly in one direction or another in its frantic efforts to escape the horsemen. Suddenly, as if something had unlocked the crowd, it dispersed so quickly that I had no time to choose whither I should fly; for there at but a short distance away I saw a galloping hussar riding down on me with sabre raised.

"He will strike me," I thought quickly, and hate raised in the depth of my soul. My hand went quickly to my pocket, reaching for my Browning.

"I will not let him strike me," something exclaimed within me and seemed to calm me at once. A moment more and the soldier would have been upon me. Already I had drawn my revolver, when suddenly the cavalryman's mount slid and fell on the slippery pavement, crushing its rider. To the left and right I saw galloping soldiers; but soon the street was emptied, so that I could cross quietly over and turn into a side way.

Such a scene has often been enacted in Warsaw, bent as it was under the yoke of Russia; yet we did not publish our tortures to the world, for we had faith in our destiny, were strong and hoped for the day of our revenge—that revenge which came in 1920 when we checked and defeated the Red Army in the heart of our own land and bought with our blood the rebirth of a free Polish State.

The waves of the Revolution of 1905 rolled farther and farther out over southern and eastern Russia. When in the south the courageous, liberty-loving people of the Caucasus rose and far to the east the Mongolian tribes held in armed subjection to Russia began to federate and

organize themselves, a group of officials near the throne sensed the gravity of the situation and counselled the Tsar to grant a constitutional government to Russia. But the Tsar, listening to the advice of the extreme monarchists, refused his support to the constitutionalists and answered them by dismissing the over-liberal courtiers.

This attitude of the Court persisted until Count S. J. Witte, disliked by the Tsar but possessing a very great influence among officials and people alike, made use of it in the interests of the movement toward a more liberal constitutional form of government.

In those unhappy months of 1904 and 1905 two cataclysms overwhelmed Russia—one in the guise of the ever onward-marching Japanese Army ; the other, the Revolution which profoundly shook the foundations of the State.

CHAPTER III

SUPPLIES FOR KUROPATKIN'S ARMY

ON the return from my trip to the capital I arrived at Harbin in the spring of 1905 and, though I heard the stories of the destruction of the Russian warships at Port Arthur, I found the general sentiment everywhere excellent. People still had faith in the ultimate victory of Russia and expected much from the new regiments constantly arriving from the west.

In the meantime, having completed the organization and equipment of my laboratory, I had a great deal of accumulated work upon my hands. Orders from the General Staff directed me to search out some local supply of oil for use as a lubricant in the artillery, for the transport wagons in the field and for the axles of the railway carriages, as well as for the manufacture of soap. The problem was shortly resolved by the discovery in the oil extracted from the soya bean of the qualities necessary for these purposes. Also these beans were produced in such a really fabulous amount in northern Manchuria that the question of quantity production for military purposes was thus taken care of. After having worked out a new method of manufacture, I organized and opened a factory at Harbin which turned out all sorts of oils and soaps by a cold process that was very simple and quick, and in such quantities as to meet all the needs in the war area and thus save the railway from the necessity of transporting these supplies from Europe.

The Manchurian spring, which merges so quickly into summer, found me busily engaged in this new and absorbing

task. The fresh levies of soldiers from Europe arrived with the first swallows, coming as though out on a sporting expedition and decked in white, blue and pink blouses, which gave to the whole neighbourhood of Harbin the appearance of bright groups of flowers. It was a pleasing sight to watch these gay spots of colour on the dark emerald ground of meadows and the foliage that is so rampant in Manchuria.

But when these same brilliant colours were transferred to the battle lines around Liaoyang, they served as admirable targets for the Japanese gunners and riflemen, who found such shooting easy and often wiped out whole companies or even battalions. Only then, after these costly and fatal lessons, was the difference between the uniforms of the Russians and the Japanese appreciated. The Japanese had adopted the regular khaki and enjoyed its natural protection against the greenish-brown background of the landscape. A popular outcry soon arose for a change in the disastrous hues of the multi-coloured blouses and had its repercussion in my laboratory, where I soon found a method of extracting from the lignite, or brown coal, that abounds in the region a dye for giving a neutral hue to the soldiers' linen.

In the meantime my voracious soap factory was always demanding more and more of the soya bean oil. As it was then not available in sufficient quantity on the Harbin market, I determined to start out in search of a district where the oil was plentiful and from which it could be readily transported to Harbin. With my assistant and two Cossacks I journeyed up the Sungari River in a south-westerly direction with the thought in mind that, if big bean plantations and supplies of the oil were found in this region, the Chinese could easily bring the oil downstream in their single-masted junks. I had been told that I should find large plantations of soya beans in the neighbourhood of Hsin Ch'eng Fu or Petuna, a large trading centre located near the point where the Sungari bends

round to the eastward, as it comes down from the mountains of Kirin. Consequently I took passage on the steamer *Pogranitchnik* for that place.

The Sungari has cut its course through layers of loess, this characteristic fertile, yellow Chinese soil, composed of the dusts of the north, the blowing sands from the Gobi, mud from the spring freshets and the remains of decaying vegetation and small organisms. As we made our way up against the swift yellow current, we frequently saw immense pieces of the yellow clay, sometimes carrying bushes and even trees, break off from the bank and sink into the undermining stream to be borne northward to help build up some new shoals in process of formation below or to be carried out and deposited on the bar at the mouth of the Amur.

We passed numerous small villages between the Chinese port of Harbin where we embarked, called Fu Chia Tien, and Petuna, numbering as a rule a few of the mud-coloured *fang-tzu*, or Chinese houses, and the inevitable shrine, built near the river bank in the shadow of the trees.

Often, when our steamer in its tortuous windings skirted close to the bank, the Chinese rushed out from their mud-plastered houses, stared at us curiously and voiced their comments in monosyllabic, incomprehensible words. Then, as we drew alongside and stopped at one of the larger villages to take on wood fuel for the engine, well-armed Russian soldiers would come on board and take post along the docks. When I asked one of them the reason for this amount of precaution out in these apparently tranquil places, he answered :

"Many of the villages along the Sungari are the headquarters or hiding-places of gangs of *hunghutzes*. These Manchurian brigands are really very dangerous, for they have fair equipment, an unusual scouting system and a clever organization. Attacks on steamers, especially when they are carrying money and arms, are rather frequent.

They are a dangerous people, these Chinese, sir ; and they don't like us."

I made no reply to the soldier, though I might have given him one very strong reason why the Chinese did not like the Russians, if I had chosen to relate to him the story of the Blagoveschensk massacre in 1899, when General Gribsky, Governor of the Amur Province, caused the drowning of about three thousand Chinese, men women and children alike, by his order that they should leave Russian territory and cross at once to their own bank of the Amur. That there should be no delay in the execution of his order, he had his soldiers drive these helpless people into the fast-flowing and deep river with the very natural and expected result that they were all drowned.

Also the general treatment accorded by the Russians to the Chinese in Manchuria had conduced only to this end. We Poles had known the same thing in our country, and naturally hated the Russians for it ; but I realized that it would be a useless task to point out these facts to the soldier, for he would not understand having respect for anyone who was not a Russian, especially for a people whose virtues did not demonstrate themselves in a military manner. A Russian distinguishes only the weak, whom he despises and persecutes, and the strong, whom he fears.

During our days on the river my hunter's heart was thrilled with watching, in the early morning hours and during the dusk of evening, the flocks of wild duck and the V's of honking geese going north in their spring migration. They usually flew easily and low, calling to one another with notes that betokened no distrust. One could even distinguish the sounds of the heavier wings of the geese and swans mingled with the quicker rhythms of duck and teal. They flew without fear, as they had not experienced danger in the marshy jungles of Siam and Burma ; only now they were nearing attractive feeding grounds where death awaited some of them. There across the railroad stretched the marshes, where hunters crouched

and awaited their advent and where, through all the weeks of spring, individual birds are summoned by the hunter on their last flight and tumble or sail with wounded breast and wing to earth and death.

But such thoughts steal into the mind only here in town, when one is sitting at a desk with telephone and electric reading-lamp by one's side and with the jangling of cars and the threatening klaxons of the motors intruding from the street; but out there, where the long lines of geese string over the river, the hunter has no such scruples. His eyes only count the birds and narrow down to fix his aim.

As I watched the very first flocks from our steamer's deck, I resolved, just as soon as my work should permit, to go out for a hunt. I never left home without a shotgun and a rifle, and a long sojourn in the Ussurian country had taught me that a hunter with less than three hundred shells is no hunter at all but only a pitiable dilettante. Consequently I had with me my 12-gauge Sauer, my Henel rifle and more, oh many more than three hundred cartridges.

Petuna was also really only a village with the identical type of *fang-tzu* which we had seen all along the ba . The single difference was that the houses were more in number and crowded together, forming the larger streets and alleys thronged with Chinese and Manchu men, women and naked children, with carts piled high with kaoliang and sacks of millet, beans and flour, most of these thoroughfares being filled with pigs, chickens, mud and dirt, dirt without end! A larger two-storied building with a Chinese curved roof and surrounded by a mud wall flanked one side of an open square. Two mast-like poles with long streamers carrying a line of Chinese hieroglyphs dominated the entrance and marked the enclosure as the *Yamen*, the official residence of the *Taotai* with his small garrison, which acted as the local police.

As it was necessary for me to obtain certain documents from the *Taotai*, I visited the *Yamen*. When I entered,

a large, broad-shouldered Chinese in blue trousers and a short blue coat, was sitting on a raised platform in the centre of the main building directly opposite the entrance gate, whose painted wooden screen protected all this, however, from the gaze of the passers-by. The man wore also a peculiar red apron with a black, curling border. He gave me an indifferent glance and continued his work—a strange and ominous one, for he was scouring with brick dust and oil an immense heavy sword with a large curving blade. A small table with a red frontal cloth carrying two black hieroglyphs stood in front of the raised platform. A little distance apart five Chinese knelt with their necks imprisoned in great heavy cangues, their hands tied to a long pole and their ankles fastened with chains. Bending under the weight of the heavy wooden collars, which had chafed their necks and shoulders, they looked curiously at me, talking and even laughing loudly. Once or twice one of them put a question to the big man with the sword, which he answered in a thick, feelingless voice.

In a few moments the *Taotai* appeared, a small, thin man in a black silken overgown and the regular official hat with a red button and a peacock feather as the insignia of his rank. When the Cossack interpreter made known to him my wishes, the official pointed to the red table and spoke at some length to the Cossack, frequently turning to me, as he spoke, with a smile or a salute.

"The *Taotai* offers his apologies and says that he will only be able to prepare your documents after half an hour, for just now he must pass sentence upon these *hunghutzes*, who have been taken red-handed in robbery. Note, please, the inscription on the red frontal cloth. It is very stern: 'Culprit, tremble!' To instil fear is a well-recognized element in the administration of the Chinese law."

"And who is the man with the sword?" I asked, even though I felt sure I should not require more than one guess to answer my own question.

"He is the executioner," answered the Cossack. "These poor men will surely be beheaded, for I heard one of them asking the executioner if he could sever the head from the body with one clean stroke."

While the Cossack was thus speaking with me, the *Taotai* had perused some papers, set his seal on them and again entered the conversation with many polite bows.

"The *Taotai* invites you to be present at the trial and at the execution," explained my interpreter. Unattracted by the invitation, I declined without regret and announced my intention of returning in half an hour.

During this interval I visited the town, wandering along the principal street, where all sorts of shops, restaurants, inns, opium dens and gambling houses jostled one another. Both sides of the roadway were lined with great and small poles, which carried many forms of red and black signs advertising commercial wares or the products of the manufacturing shops, whose fronts opened on the street.

In one of these was a bakery, or rather a confectioner's shop, where several half-naked Chinese were making steamed dumplings or *man-t'ou* and other dainties. Boot-makers, tailors, locksmiths and tinkers all worked in dark and smelly quarters. Farther on against a sunny wall two barbers plied their trade, one of them scraping the hair from the head and face of his sleeping client with a spoon-shaped razor, while the other washed and rebraided a pigtail, finishing it off with the tassel of black silk at the end.

A fat old Chinese, decked with a pair of immense black-rimmed spectacles, readily accepted by all as indubitable sign of his wisdom, sat gravely behind a little table that carried the regulation inkstone, Chinese pens, a package of paper and the familiar long envelopes with a broad red band down the middle. His business was the writing of petitions to the authorities and private letters to the relatives of those who had never been initiated into the mysteries of chirography. He was also not beneath pro-

claiming loudly the merits of his services, which he averred would bring sure results.

At another table sat a doctor, clad in a long grey overgown and also wearing the spectacles of wisdom and importance. He listened to the complaints of the sufferers and, without interrogating them for further data or even scrutinizing them for outward physical signs, closed his mental diagnosis, announced the price of the remedy and, with a dry, wrinkled hand, brought out from a little chest the magic powders and pills.

Attracted by these many street scenes, I wandered for nearly an hour before returning to the *Yamen*. As we entered, an oppressing, gruesome picture staggered us. The executioner still sat on the raised platform, cleaning his sword as before, but this time from a stain for which no oil and brick dust were required. Right there before the tribunal of justice lay the terrible evidence of the work it had done.

Soon the *Taotai*, with the regular unofficial black hat replacing the more formal headgear, appeared, smiling and amiable, and presented to me the document which recommended me to the protection and the courtesies of the various authorities in the district of Petuna. With this official introduction in hand I left the forbidding scene with considerable misgiving as to what the "protection and courtesies" of these Chinese officials might mean.

I did not discover any appreciable quantities of bean oil in or near the town, but was told where I might expect to find it and so spent another day and a half in Petuna, looking for horses and a guide and living the while on board a steamer loading cattle for the army. During this time I went all about the town and the immediate neighbourhood, as I wished to post myself on the crop prospects of the region.

Near the town the Golden Nonni, with the affluent waters of the Tolo coming from the eastern slopes of the Great Khingan range, joins the Sungari. Westward from

the Nonni and the Sungari a portion of the semi-arid eastern end of the Gobi stretches away to these mountains and affords pasturage for the numerous herds of cattle and sheep which the Kara-Khorch'in tribe of Mongols graze around their camps. Though long fingers of desert sands reach into this region, it is traversed by a few rivers which water it well enough to keep large areas of pasturage green. Perhaps the best feeding grounds of the whole border region between Manchuria and Mongolia lie between the Tolo and Shara Muren Rivers.

In Petuna the immense figures of the Kara-Khorch'ins, with their flat faces and their narrow slits of black eyes, attracted attention among the typical Chinese and Manchus. They had round heads with short, stiff, bristling hair, and their feet appeared curved from the constant contact with the saddle.

In the course of my business, I made the acquaintance of the richest merchant of the town and heard from him some interesting law regarding these Kara-Khorch'ins. He told me that this tribe had often swept down toward the Great Wall, which protected China from the attacks of the northern barbarians. More than once the powerful Sons of Heaven feared that this warlike tribe would eventually threaten Peking itself, but the Khorch'ins drew away to the north and disappeared without trace in the prairies and wastes here between the Nonni and the Khingans.

But later, in the twelfth century, during the days of the Sung dynasty, they returned to visit the country with fire and sword. It was the time when the hordes of barbarous Khitans of the great Tungutze tribe began threatening Peking from the north. These wild, big-framed Khorch'ins, closely related to the Khitans, led the van and first carried murder and plunder beyond the Great Wall, scourging with their wild fury the settled regions of the Han and forcing the terrified rulers to leave their sacred dwelling in the Forbidden City to found a new

now feeding in the crevices of the sand and in the small pools of water, which had been left behind by the receding current, or on small fry in the shallows along the spit. Many varieties of geese were here. Among them I identified the common grey goose (*Anser cinereus*), the corn goose (*Anser segetum*), the casark (*Casarca rubra*), common in Mongolia and Thibet, the coral lama bird (*Casarca rutila*), the Indian or bar-headed goose (*Anser indicus*), the bernacle (*Bernicla torquata*) and the diving goose (*Mergus merganser*). Near by on the water rode flocks of wild duck, among them the cross or mallard duck (*Anas boscas*), the red-necked duck (*Fuligula ferina*), the teal (*Nettion crecca*), the duck with white brows (*Oedemia fusca*), very rare in these latitudes. A group of silver swans floated like great flocks of white foam farther out in the stream. They were of the two well-known varieties of the crying swan (*Cygnus musicus*) and the deaf swan (*Cygnus olor*).

As is also the case in southern and eastern Siberia, this Manchurian conglomerate of the wilds had a marked peculiarity. Not only the species commonly found in the northward summer migrations but also the varieties peculiar to the south had, for some unknown reason, mingled and joined in the long aerial trek.

As we observed them from our shelter, the sun was already over the horizon and the well-known nervous unrest before flight was beginning to manifest itself among the birds. The geese scattered along the shoal began to break up into groups, with the old and more experienced males emerging as leaders, while the others calmly waddled into their places along the forming sides of the V's or quarrelled raucously over the best positions in the formation, that is, those nearest the ends of the lines where it is easier to fly. The birds raised their heads and stretched their long necks toward the glowing face of the golden sun, as they prepared to start. The short, bass notes of the leaders and the querulous voices of the others filled the air, but it was not from among the chattering geese

capital in Nanking on the Yangtze. But another wave of barbarian hordes appeared to conquer and drive out the Khorch'ins and Khitans. These were the Kin Tartars, who supplanted their savage forerunners in the possession of China's rich fields, only to yield themselves, in turn, to the old civilization of the conquered land and disappear in the great Chinese ocean, leaving nothing after them except the impetus to the Chinese to repair and strengthen the Great Wall against possible further invasion from the north.

On my second day in town I secured, for a rather high price, horses and a guide and shortly after dawn on the following day set out from Petuna to travel east along the right bank of the Sungari; for I had been informed that, in the district between the small river of Hsi La Ho and the town of La Lin, situated at the foot of the mountain of the same name, I should find large plantations of beans and numerous native mills turning out oil and beancake.

Above Petuna the country along the river was more sparsely peopled. Sometimes we rode for hours without passing a house. I was even afraid at times that we might have no roof over our heads at night, but in this I was happily reassured, when at sunset we rode into sight of a small hamlet of several farm-houses set in a grove of tall elms.

Here we stopped for the night. Our guide led us to the largest *fang-tzu*, which was the ordinary, long dwelling with a single thin wooden partition cutting off about a third of the space for kitchen and living quarters. In this there was the typical low mud stove with a big bowl-like iron pan that serves for boiling their porridges of grain and their vegetable soups, for frying occasionally in bean or sesamum seed oil, for steaming the *man-t'ou* or dumpling-bread of the north and for all the other culinary operations. A fire of dry kaoliang stalks and driftwood fished out of the river burned under the iron pan while the smoke carried away through a flue that circulated under and

through the raised platform of mud brick, or *k'ang*, and then issued forth, on the outside of the house, through a conical clay chimney. The *k'ang* is thus warmed by the waste heat from the kitchen fire and serves the purpose of both a stove and a general bed for the whole family. I saw no trace of furnishings in the room save the straw mats spread over the dirt on top of the *k'ang*, some wooden basins and cups, two buckets and an axe, which appeared to comprise the total personal property of the household.

The Chinese host called the women. Two old ones and a young one answered, all of them ugly and awfully dirty. They were sullen and answered all our questions with contemptuous silence. They busied themselves with sweeping dust from the *k'ang*, then prepared tea and disappeared again. We settled for the night on the unbearably hot *k'ang* and surrendered ourselves to the mercies of a whole army of previous occupants, who made hideous the night through their proofs of valour and greed. At the outset I tried to fight this army, making vigorous counter-attacks; but I was eventually forced to capitulate and waited tediously for the dawn, fearing that, if the sun were late, my losses would prove fatal. But the sun was prompt and mercifully drove the satiated enemy into their dugouts to spend the day in dreaming of another night raid. It was not, however, until I was on the highroad in full retreat from the battle ground that I discovered some of the enemy still hovering on the flanks and only shook these off vigorous riding.

As we proceeded farther along the bank of the Sungari, we came upon rank growths of willows, which shielded the road from view on the river-side. At one point a long sand spit projected far into the stream. Through the tops of the bushes I saw a sight which stirred and enchanted me. An immense flock of geese blackened the shoal, and, though it was impossible for me to make an accurate estimate, they must have numbered thousands. Evidently they had passed the night hereabouts and were

that the signal for departure came. It was the ducks that first rose with their more strident tones and, with the hurrying splash of wings on the water followed by the more measured cadence, invited their fellow-wayfarers to continue their journey north, whither their instinct, that unfailing heritage of past æons, unerringly guided them.

Next the swans moved their great majestic wings, cut the water with their pluméd breasts and rose in widening circles higher and higher, until they seemed to be almost motionless, poised beneath broken drifts of clouds, which, in their feathery whiteness, seemed themselves like unto great moving birds, shining in the sun. But when they had taken sufficient elevation, they headed north, an undulating, vibrant grey stream flowing off toward Arctic space. In a few moments the geese rose with their dull trumpeting and noisy splashing of wings and, dressing their lines, drove the wedges of their V's in swift pursuit.

The shoal was deserted; yet, for some time, I could not tear myself away from watching the disappearing broken lines in the north, for I am always thrilled by the sight and contemplation of these magnificent, strong-winged birds making this heroic pilgrimage from the Indian marshes with their lazy, venomous cobras and their rapacious tigers, to the far-away peat bogs at the mouth of the Yenisei, the Ob and the Lena and along the shores of the Arctic Ocean. To this flight they are driven by an atavistic instinct, strong as life itself and ineradicable as death—an instinct that guides them to these coldest climes, where they will breed the strongest and most nearly perfect of young. In obedience to this ever-recurring command these geese, ducks and swans go thousands of miles every spring, and nothing can stop them. Hunger, cold, driving rain, snow and the death that men project up into the sky—nothing of all this can stay these winged migrants nor change the course of these victims of instinct and destiny. They fly along routes probably established

through millions of years, known and marked for them as clearly as paths and highways are for men.

Exotic birds in these northern migrations always made a strange impression upon me. Frequently, when hunting in Manchuria and Siberia, I have identified Indian geese, beautiful Japanese ibises, flamingos in their blaze of colour and Egyptian storks, all heading for, or returning from, these Arctic regions, which are really foreign to them. I often pondered over the question of what might be impelling these feathered worshippers of sun and sand in their dangerous proselyting flight. Was it the resistless command of nature, pointing to the necessity of perfecting their kind by breeding in the Far North a stronger and more enduring progeny, which should bring new vigour to counteract the enervating and destroying influences of the tropics? Or were these exotics unquiet souls, lured by, and driven on to, great efforts full of difficulties and dangers? Were they such individuals as we find among men, whom we catalogue, according to the results of their efforts, as "madmen" or "geniuses"? Who will answer this question for us?

I should always have been ready to forgo shooting at these avian Columbuses, Vasco de Gamas, Menéndezes, Stanleys and Nansens, if I could have distinguished in the flocks flying in the mysterious half-light and half-shade of dawn or evening these unusually enterprising and tragically beautiful beings. Alas, we recognize them only when we find them covered with blood in the reeds or sweet-flag, biered on the element which is foreign and merciless to them. At such times I have mourned for them and have pictured to myself landscapes from the journeys of these victims of my hunting passion. There has come before me the yellow ribbon of the Nile, the ruins of kingly Thebes with the mystery of blessings or curses petrified in each stone block of the temples, in each colonnade. Then through the shimmering heat of the Indian plains, blanketed with sultry vapours made heavier by the aroma of flowers,

I have caught the lacy patterns of the pagodas of Benares, the minarets of Allahabad and the scarlet gate of Delhi. Farther on, among plantains, elms and tamarisks, have stood out the curving-roofed temples of south China along the banks of the Pearl River and the more sombre cities dotting the course of the great Yangtze Kiang. Above these vast panoramas of land and water travel waving ranks of these beautiful birds, shimmering and undulating like autumn spiderwebs floating in the air.

However, these visions suddenly faded as though they had never been ; for, as I gazed out over the willow bushes to the deserted shoal, I heard right near me the dull trumpeting and whirring of the powerful wings of a new, low-flying flock of geese, and automatically raised my gun to race the leader by a few feet, without ever stopping to think that my leaden messenger might cut the life-thread of some bird dreamer or of some bold conquistador. But then something stopped me ; and I raised my head, slowly brought my gun down and dreamily watched the flock disappear on the horizon. When they were out of sight, I turned and continued my own journey up along the river bank.

As the road moulded itself to the curves of the stream, there stretched out on the left great areas of those marvellously furrowed Chinese fields of kaoliang, millet and wheat, interspersed with sections of soya beans. Chinese and Manchus worked everywhere through the fields and in their vegetable patches around the small hamlets or detached *fang-tzu* which clustered in the shadows of tall trees farther back from the river bank.

Toward the end of a long day's ride we came, at about four in the afternoon, upon a most difficult stretch of road through a section that was all under water. The road became a bog, full of holes and ruts, into which our horses constantly stumbled and plunged, until we took on the appearance of statues of fresh clay, for we were spattered from head to foot with the sticky, yellow mud. In this

plight we met some Khorch'ins, nodding on their carefully advancing camels. They told our guide that heavy snows had fallen on the La-Lin during the winter and that torrential rains in the mountains had now brought the waters of some smaller streams up over the surrounding country. For some distance we travelled through this flooded territory, losing our way at times and miring at others in the bogs of this yellow, fecund soil. Kaoliang stubble, cornstalks, willow bushes and occasional oaks showed above the water here and there through the low fields; while on the more elevated places, where it was dry, much life was visible. Hares, seeking safety from the waters that had taken possession of their holes, fieldmice and, on one mound, red foxes hid in the bushes. Over the inundated lands snipe, pewits (*Vanellus cristatus*), wading birds (*Actitis hypoleucos*) and other species of gulls (*Gallinago*) flew in all directions, settling occasionally on the rocks or bushes that protruded from the water and then again commencing their restless flight.

After laborious, exhausting wading we came just at sunset to a chain of hillocks, where the road once more emerged upon dry land and where, at the edge of a small wood, we discovered a village of some fifty to sixty houses. It was Hsi La Ho, the place we were seeking. As we approached the village, we passed through extensive fields of the soya bean, and in the outskirts of the place we found the regulation long Chinese building in which the beans were pressed.

The headman of the village received us very hospitably and, after reading the *Hu-chao* of the *Taotai*, lodged us in a rather clean house and summoned a meeting of the dealers to discuss the question of delivering bean oil to Harbin. Soon I had signed an agreement with the inhabitants of the village and had arranged with the headman that he should conclude others with the neighbouring districts.

After having visited the oil mills on the following morning, I felt free to go hunting during the period of rest

which we had to give our horses following their strenuous trip of the preceding day. I took the Cossack Nicholas with me and headed north for the edge of the inundated lands, where I had seen the snipe and other water-birds. For a considerable distance we trudged over low hillocks covered with scrub oak. Pheasant cocks in their brilliant colouring and the hens of quieter hues frequently flushed before us with loud squawks and that powerful drumming of the wings that sends a thrill through a hunter's heart. But this day I was to take none of them home with me, as they all rose at long range and as I had only small snipe shot with me.

Chance seemed against us. At a distance of between two and three miles from the village we saw a solitary house situated at the bottom of a rather deep vale with two saddled horses tied to a post in front of it. When we had made a hundred yards farther, two Chinese ran out of the house with carbines in their hands, sprang adroitly upon their horses and galloped off toward the farther end of the dell, where they disappeared around a turn in the road. In just a little while they reappeared on a hillock farther on, stopped and began observing us attentively.

"It is a *hunghutze* patrol," whispered the Cossack in fear. "We must turn back."

Under these conditions hunting was impossible, as we might easily have fallen into the hands of these Chinese brigands, who during the Russo-Japanese War had proved themselves to be very cruel to the "*man-tzu*," as they designated all Europeans. We immediately returned to the village and left the same day for Harbin. As we learned that a junk laden with eggs and chickens was sailing that afternoon from the neighbouring village of T'un Hsi for Fu Chia Tien, I ordered our guide to take the horses back to Petuna and went with my men on board this junk to enjoy immensely the rapid run downstream to Harbin, where a surprise awaited me.

CHAPTER IV

INTO THE FOREST

ON returning to Harbin I found a despatch from the General Staff containing the announcement that I had been honoured with the Cross of St. Stanislaus and offering me the post of Chemical Expert to the General Staff. But in addition to this pleasing news the letter also communicated to me orders, in the execution of which I nearly lost my life. The Staff directed me to organize on a big scale the manufacture of charcoal for use in the military workshops, inasmuch as there was no coke factory anywhere in the Manchurian territory. A special timber concession was set aside for my purposes.

Almost parallel to the course of the Sungari the forest-covered range of Chang-Kuan-Tsai Lan, which is one of the southern spurs of the Little Khingans, runs in a north-easterly direction. In the vast forests on the southern slope of this range, near the small station of Udzimi on the Chinese Eastern Railway, lay the concession which had been put at my disposal.

On the day of receiving my orders I went immediately to visit the territory of my future activities and to plan out roughly their course. Udzimi consisted only of a very small station building for the telegraph office and the administration staff and of a long brick barracks, which afforded housing for the railway hands and some Cossacks. Immediately behind these station buildings the forest stretched away in unbroken lines. I took two Cossacks and plunged into it. We found it was composed of a mixed stand of deciduous and evergreen trees, chiefly

pinces and firs, and that it was a real jungle with thick, almost impenetrable undergrowth everywhere. It was not a good stand for manufacturing lumber but for burning charcoal it was exactly what we wanted. As we entered the woods, we followed a broad path, on a low, wet section of which I saw from the tracks of horses and men that the route was considerably travelled. It finally led us to a swirling, splashing little stream that came tumbling boisterously down from the mountain. On its bank was the little village of Ho Lin with restricted fields of kaoliang and beans around it, and, farther back, the edge of the dark green forest that carpeted the mountain slope.

As I needed many labourers for felling and cutting up the trees, I decided to begin the search for them in this little village. However, these peasants, who belonged to the Daour tribe of Manchus, refused my offers for work but agreed to lodge our labourers in their houses. Yet even this much was of very definite advantage, for it enabled us to have a supply of food right at the edge of the forest, when our work should begin.

On the following day I returned to Harbin and busied myself with the immediate organization of the enterprise. This took me at the outset to the Chinese town, Fu Chia Tien, where the native element in this new and pulsating great Russian railroad centre in the heart of northern Manchuria swarmed in tremendous crowds, lived in the hastily built houses and inns of the growing settlement and overflowed in the poorer quarters into the most miserable and unkempt of hovels and holes. It was a matter of common knowledge, during these war days especially, that it was far from safe for a well-dressed individual to frequent certain sections of the town, where *hungghutze* bands, operating in the neighbourhood of Harbin, often had their headquarters or, at least, lodged spies and scouts. At this period of the Russo-Japanese War the place gave the appearance of just a huge village with only the flags above the *Yamen* to accord to it the more formidable

status of an important seat of the local government. However squalid in appearance, it was in reality a centre of great commercial activity and of considerable political importance. When I returned to it sixteen years later, in the summer of 1921 after my escape from Mongolia, I could hardly recognize the former town. Four-storied buildings, streets of well-built shops, theatres, the imposing residence of the local *Taotai*, temples, great warehouses and all the other attributes of a great town were there, even to droskies, automobiles and rickshaws.

I had been given the address of a Chinese merchant, Tung Ho Shan, who provided the Railway Administration with the labourers it required. Finding him in his shop, I quickly arranged with him for the despatch to Udzimi on the very next morning of three hundred wood-cutters. When, in response to his caution to me never to engage labourers except through him, I smiled a bit ironically, he gravely warned me :

"Don't think it is just a question of profit for me ! Far from that. When I supply you with labourers, I send you only such men as are personally known to us or to other reliable firms and for whose character we can vouch. If you engage men at random, you may easily be employing *hunghutzes* and may have endless trouble with them."

Having arranged with Tung Ho Shan that I should be in Udzimi two days after the men had already been installed there, I went at once to the task of finding the necessary technical assistants and succeeded in locating two among the staff of the Chinese Eastern Railway. One was named Kazik and the other Samsonoff, both of them from the mining district of the Urals and acquainted almost from childhood with the work of charcoal burning. They were both young men but of quite opposite characteristics. Kazik was almost a giant. I do not recall ever having seen anyone with such enormous shoulders and breast, with the exception of my companion in Mongolia, the *agronome* whom I described in the account of my journeyings

through that land. In spite of his size, Kazik was spare and his body seemed but a bundle of pliant leather thongs. His movements were graceful and quick; his blue eyes snapped with vivacity and courage; while his face was nearly always cheery and frank. In contrast, Samsonoff was short, with light, curly hair, a gentle, melancholy expression and big, dreamy brown eyes. Both of them at once attracted me, so that I immediately requested the Railway Administration to put them at my disposal.

On the very next day we all went together in my service car to Udzimi. On the way I learned that Kazik was an enthusiastic hunter; and, as I had already peered into the thick Manchurian *taiga*, I promised myself many hunting pleasures. In such a wild country a good companion is not only a very agreeable, but a quite indispensable, adjunct. From my chats with them I gathered that Kazik and Samsonoff had been acquainted for a long time and had lived in close and amicable relations. After my assistants had become a little less formal toward me, Samsonoff took me aside one day and confided to me:

"Sir, I have been married for a year and it will be very difficult for me to be separated from my wife. I shall ask your permission to bring her to Udzimi as soon as the work is in full swing and living quarters can be provided."

Seeing the supplicatory look in the eyes of the beautiful youth, emphasized by his trembling lips, I immediately gave my consent; but at the same time I made another distinct observation. Samsonoff was talking with me in a low voice, almost a whisper. Swinging round unexpectedly, I discovered Kazik with his face turned away from us but with his head held tense in the effort to catch our conversation at the other end of the car. As is so frequently the case in my relations with my fellow-beings, I seemed to sense some deep, personal trouble between these two young men to whom Fate had united me.

Chatting on with Samsonoff, I soon learned that he had made the acquaintance of his wife in Harbin, where she

worked as a typist in the administration office of the railway, and that it was through Kazik, his friend from childhood, that he had first met her.

"And is Kazik also married?" I asked.

"No!" exclaimed Samsonoff. "Kazik will not marry young, as I have."

"Why not?"

"Because," whispered the boy, as he glanced cautiously toward his friend, "Kazik is a proud being, full of ambition and demands much of life."

"I don't understand. Please explain," I said, much interested by the suggestions of Samsonoff.

"Kazik is the son of a simple labourer, but he declares he will attain to a high station in life. He studies energetically, works all the time and pushes ahead everywhere it is possible. I really don't know when he sleeps. He has sworn to himself that he will eventually be rich, learned and equal to the best around him. He considers a wife would be a hindrance in his plans and, therefore, he will not marry." As he spoke these last words, Samsonoff lowered his head and sighed. Here our conversation stopped.

A few hours later we arrived at the station of Udzimi and my car was detached from the train and run into a siding. Immediately a little, thin, Cossack sergeant, named Shum, presented himself to me and announced that he had received telegraphic orders from Harbin to provide me with a military escort in the territory we were to work, and added that Sergeant Lisvienko with eight Cossacks had already been despatched to Ho Lin to await my orders. I learned also from Sergeant Shum that my Chinese labourers had already arrived. Part of them were lodged with the villagers, while for the other they had already begun the erection of two sheds with heated *k'angs*. Soon we reached Ho Lin and took up quarters in the house of the headman of the village, who also arranged for the storage of our equipment near by.

At the village I was met by the elderly, red-haired Cossack, Lisvienko, wearing the Cross of St. George which he had received during the Boxer trouble in 1900, when a Russian detachment from the Amur army under the command of General Linievitch did such valiant service at Tientsin and joined in the march to Peking. The sergeant's eight Cossacks ranged themselves in front of my temporary quarters and presented arms.

That same evening I selected the sites for the charcoal ovens and parcelled out the work between Kazik and Samsonoff. The first was to prepare the place for the stoves and to construct them, while the second was to superintend the felling of the trees and their transport to the ovens.

At the very outset I realized that we should have to construct a narrow-gauge railway into the forest just as soon as we had cut off the trees within easy hauling distance. With these thoughts of the ultimate extent of our task, I was able, when writing my report to Harbin on the very first evening after my arrival on the property, to hear the ring of the axes, the shouts of the workers and the crashings of the falling trees as certain assurance that we had at least made a rapid start toward our distant goal.

When the answer to my report arrived from Harbin, directing me to come there to discuss the question of the railroad, several ovens were already in operation on the place. These were the regular Ural ovens, in the prototypes of which the forests of the manufacturing districts in the Urals had been almost entirely consumed. For me, in my capacity of chemist and economist, this wanton method of exploitation of the forest wealth was criminally barbarous; and I consequently decided to try to construct a brick oven that would permit continuous firing and would conserve the by-products of pitch for the use of the army. I learned that there was a Chinese brick-kiln at the next station along the line from Udzimi, so that the necessary brick could be easily obtained.

While the Ural ovens had been under construction, barracks for the labourers and houses for my assistants and the Cossacks were also prepared. These were the usual Chinese *fang-tzu* minus the *k'ang* and fitted with ordinary stoves and European kitchens.

CHAPTER V

A DRAMA OF THE CHARCOAL OVENS

MY trip to Harbin with my plans for the railroad and for the big brick oven kept me in town two weeks. Kazik telegraphed regularly his reports on the work, from which I knew that the undertaking was steadily expanding, that about forty Ural ovens were already in operation, turning out thirty tons of charcoal daily, that the staff and labourers were in their quarters and that work on the railway had been commenced, as twelve miles of old rails, an old locomotive and ten flat cars had already arrived.

On my return to Udzimi I was delighted to be able to ride out to Ho Lin on our own branch line, in spite of the fact that the locomotive, running on the unballasted track, rattled in every part and proceeded very gingerly. On nearing the river, I did not recognize Ho Lin, for a new village stood beside and dominated the old one. There were the long thatched buildings for Chinese quarters, my own house with its tall, protruding stove-pipe chimneys and a veranda over which the men had trailed a transplanted Manchurian hop vine, and stores and warehouses with coal, commissariat supplies and tools all about them, while in the distance smoked the lines of ovens built by my assistants. The Manchurian jungle, this dense thicket of tree-trunks and bushes, bound together in defence of its solitude with Virginia creeper, hops and other parasitic vines, seemed to have taken fright at the coming of man and to have fled back to the mountains, leaving only the naked, yellow earth behind. Trees had already been felled

for some distance, and I realized at once how well our prompt decision for a railroad had been justified. It was evident at a glance that within a very few weeks we should be compelled to transport the trees a considerable distance to the ovens. The storage sheds were filled to capacity with charcoal and great heaps of it lay outside, covered with protecting strips of bark that had been taken from the larger trees. We could have begun at once shipping out the much-needed charcoal but were forced to await the completion of a proper roadbed.

That first afternoon Samsonoff invited me to his house for tea. On the veranda, also already adorned with a transplanted hop vine, I was met by quite a young woman, Madame Vera, his wife. She was a strong contrast to her husband. Whereas Samsonoff had a pale, melancholy face and sad, dreamy eyes under soft ringlets of hair falling well down over his forehead, his wife was the personification of robust health, with gaiety predominating in her brilliantly coloured face, her black, fiery eyes and sensual lips.

They took me through their quarters, composed of a small entrance hall and two rooms. The mud walls, ceiling and floor could have made the most cheerless impression, were it not for the saving adornment of woman's hand, which, with desire to guide it, can always make a cosy nest in a Chinese *fang-tzu*, a railway car, a ship's cabin or even a prison cell. The floor was covered with Chinese mats, which were also used as hangings for the walls and carried the decorations of artificial flowers, postal cards and photographs. Pieces of bright cloth covered the home-made chairs and benches, while gaudy bamboo and glass bead curtains, a contrastingly white tablecloth with a shining samovar and a Chinese vase filled with wildflowers combined to work the miracle of changing mud-plastered rooms into a home.

I spent a pleasant evening in these neat quarters of the Samsonoffs, chatting over many matters, local and distant. My evening's pleasure would have been much greater,

had it not been disturbed by the impressions forced in upon me through my involuntary observations of the three people seated before me—three, because in the course of the evening we had been joined by the broad-shouldered Kazik.

As I told them something of my travels across Europe and Asia, as well as of some of the unusual characters I had met in my wanderings, I saw how the eyes of Kazik gleamed and how his lips tightened with something between determination and obstinacy, until finally he burst out :

“How fortunate you are ! You travel and you are trained to know what is worth observing. You learn more and more and afterwards you use all this knowledge to improve your position in society ; while we ? We, the children of peasants and workmen, are obliged to gain unaided, as best we can, knowledge and respect among men. This is a social injustice ! ”

“How could you know and say that knowledge has come easily to me ? ” I asked, surprised and astonished at this outburst.

“I do not know this,” he answered, “and I did not mean you personally ; but I was speaking of the whole noble and educated class. I respect it but, at the same time, I envy and hate it. I will gain everything which this class, born to intelligence, possesses and I will sail on high seas. I will prove then what I know and how I can live. No one has yet seen such a life as I shall show them ! ”

My astonishment increased. Whence came to this son of the Urals this craving for knowledge and for the intelligence to enjoy life to the full ?

“Do you seek real learning only to enable you to lead an extravagant, gay life ? ” I asked him, curious as to what he would reply.

“Yes,” he answered without hesitation. “In my childhood I gazed into the palaces of our Ural industrial magnates, where I might not enter, and in those early days I took an oath that I should one day myself have a palace even

more magnificent than any of theirs ; for its owner and builder would be myself, a workman's son ! But, with thinking, I came to realize that, as a labourer, I should never be rich and, even if I might by chance acquire wealth, I should not know how to profit by it. I consequently decided to study and become a man of the highest culture."

During this speech of Kazik I framed the thought that intellect alone would not be enough for the full enjoyment of life, about which this minor railway official in the forest at Udzimi dreamed at dreams. Besides knowledge one must possess in addition innate comprehension of the beautiful for which the greatest efforts and learning cannot compensate. But I did not give expression to the thought, because I did not wish in any way to rob this young man of his enthusiasm for work and progress toward perfection, and as I was of the opinion that, with time, wisdom and life itself might direct his dreams into other channels not so wholly egoistic.

While Kazik was pronouncing to us this confession, my attention was drawn to the fact that Madame Vera did not once take her eyes from his face during the whole wild outburst and that her cheeks seemed to flush more vividly than ever. Only from time to time she glanced at the expressionless—one might even say bored—face of her husband, and once a piteous smile stole into her expression, as her eyes darkened for a moment.

"Ah, you are drawing comparison," I mused.

"You dream of great things," commented the young woman, "but will you succeed?"

"Yes!" answered Kazik; and this short word stood out like a challenge.

"And then you will search for the most beautiful, the richest, the most magnificent woman in the world and will marry her?" asked the young bride with a playful smile.

"The most beautiful and the most magnificent—yes," was the reply, "but not the richest. I shall not need money."

Then I made a new observation. Kazik looked steadily for a moment at the face of the woman, with evident warmth in his gaze scanned her whole figure and turned dreamily away to some unimportant object in the corner of the room. Madame Vera nervously smoothed her hair and laughed, as it seemed to me, too loudly and too unnaturally.

I was conscious that Chance had again made me witness to the life struggle of individuals quite foreign to me and that I should behold minor, or even foolish, events that would bulk big in the lives of these three individuals and might entirely dominate their happiness and fortunes. These people, accidentally brought into my life by the community of business interests, might easily have remained unknown and of no particular interest to me, but Fate decided otherwise.

With the branch line in shape to transport the materials we shortly began the construction of the new brick oven. The work went quickly and well, thanks to the skilful Chinese workmen whom Tung Ho Shan had sent me from Harbin.

Taking advantage of our proximity to the forests, I often went hunting. A young Cossack, Rikoff, who was a fine woodsman and a tireless walker, always accompanied me, and together we tramped a large part of the neighbouring country. In the course of these excursions we crossed the timber-covered divide and entered the valley of the Mutan, which flows northward to join the Sungari at Sansing. Along the river we found some villages of the Daour Manchus on the left bank and those of the Tungutzes on the right. We remarked the interesting fact that, though the Manchus were quite like the Chinese in appearance and, in fact, indistinguishable from them in the eyes of the ordinary observer, the Tungutzes had retained their markedly different racial appearance. These latter had long been a tribe of hunters and warriors, whose forbears in past centuries had caused the masters of Peking more than once to scan timorously the northern boundary, when rumours

came of movements in the camps and villages of these Tungutzes tribes.

These inhabitants of the Mutan villages were big, broad-shouldered men, quick and skilful of movement and proud, calm and distinctly friendly in bearing. The villages seemed poor and gave one more the impression of ruins than of habitable houses, and this in spite of the fact that within these houses whole fortunes were gathered in the form of sable, skunk, marten, ermine, fox and squirrel skins, which were the spoils of their hunts and were usually sold to the Chinese merchants and foreign buyers in Ninguta.

From this valley of the Mutan the fairly large mountain range of Kentei Alin extends eastward, and farther south another, called Loye Lin, takes off. From thirty to forty-five miles behind the Loye Lin lay the Korean frontier, along which the nearest town was the Chinese border station of Hunchun. This whole region between Loye Lin and the Korean frontier was a source of great difficulty to the Russian authorities during the war. It was a well-known fact that large gangs of Chinese *hunghutzes*, under the leadership of the famous bandit chieftain, Chang Tso-lin, refuged there; and it was only after the war that it became known that this *hunghutze* leader and his bands were in the pay of Japan to make scouting expeditions and to harass the Russian armies along their extended eastern flank.

In the valley of the Mutan, Rikoff and I found large kaoliang and barley fields. The banks of the river, as well as those of its tributary streams, were lined with a thick growth of bushes, from which many pheasants and a few grey partridges broke. We brought in so many of these birds that our Ho Lin table was always well provided with them; but the hunting itself was not really interesting, as the birds were so plentiful that the shooting was monotonously easy.

We were much more attracted by the Kentei Alin Mountains, along whose foothills we had seen herds of

small deer and, on the stream banks, traces of larger ones. Twice Rikoff and I saddled our ponies for a trip into these mountains. Our first expedition was not very successful from the standpoint of hunting, as we did not even see traces of deer. While making a day of it shooting ducks, which paddled among the reeds and bushes along the shores of the mountain lakes, I also made two interesting observations. At various points I had to make my way through growths of hazel, and several times in these bushes heard sharp flappings of wings and the cries of flushing birds. Though the call seemed quite familiar to me, yet I could not name the bird. Finally, just as I was about to leave one of these hazel brakes, a dark brown bird with a long beak flushed within sight of me.

"Can it be a woodcock?" I asked myself incredulously, as I fired.

On picking up my bird, I found that it was, sure enough, an ordinary woodcock, the first one I had ever seen or heard of in Manchuria. Then I wandered around for some time in the brakes, but, as all the birds rose far away from me, I succeeded in bringing down only two more and had great trouble in finding these in the thick bushes and high grass.

The second observation was of quite a different character. The Kentei Alin Mountains are entirely wild, the best proof of which is the fact that the Chinese search here for ginseng, this mysterious medicinal plant growing in the virgin forest or in the wildest mountain glades, where the mighty prince of the jungle, the tiger, exercises his dominion and guard over the magic root. It was, therefore, naturally to be expected that few, if any, traces of human beings would be found. But traces were numerous—and what traces! We frequently found the spoors of iron-shod horses along the marshy banks of the mountain streams and on the sandy shoals, even in one place, a fire that had just been left and was not quite burned out, near which, among cleanly gnawed bones and some unfinished *hsiao mi-tzu* gruel, I picked up a carbine cartridge with

Japanese characters on it and an empty conserve tin with a Japanese label. What could it mean? Who was prowling here so near to our undertaking and whither was he bound? For a time these questions remained unanswered.

During a subsequent hunting expedition on the slopes of Kentei Alin, Rikoff and I stumbled upon a large herd of wild boar, numbering some fifteen head and plunging southward through the thicket at a tremendous pace. In answer to our leaden command to their front rank one of the animals went prone. As we were busy cutting hams from it, the Cossack suddenly raised his head and asked in a startled voice :

“Did you hear that? It was a bullet and not far away.”

We stopped to listen and soon caught the sound of a far-away volley and the well-known whistle of bullets through the branches. One took a big splinter from the trunk of a broken tree hard by.

“They are aiming at us!” exclaimed Rikoff. “They must be the fellows with the iron-shod horses, but they certainly are not *hunghutzes*, for the *hunghutzes* never shoe their horses. Could it be, perhaps, one of our patrols?”

In the evening, when I told Kazik and Samsonoff of our experience, they were both strongly of the opinion that bands of *hunghutzes* were roaming about in the neighbouring forests. I decided to make a report to the General Staff and dismissed the matter for the moment from my mind.

Afterwards, that same evening, I went out to make a round of the nearest ovens and, on my return from this, passed back near the barracks of the labourers at Ho Lin and close to the quarters of my assistants. Behind these houses bushes stretched down to the bank of a small stream that ran through the village. As I was making my way along this, I heard a low conversation from the opposite bank and recognized the voice of Kazik. In a moment I made out his figure in the half-light and saw that he was gesticulating and talking to Madame Vera, who was seated on the bank. It was already rather dark, but I could discern

the bent figure of the woman and could hear her low, piteous sobs. Kazik became silent and then Madame Samsonoff asked in a low, halting voice :

" You value your own happiness so much more than mine, however much I love you ? "

Kazik remained silent for a moment, then answered gruffly :

" I also love you, but I must win for myself a free and broader life. I must, for otherwise I shall never know what calm and happiness are. Now I am but as your husband is ; then I shall be something entirely different."

" And this is your last word ? " the woman asked desperately.

" Yes ! " rang the hard, severe voice of Kazik. " We must forget about our feelings until I have conquered life."

I was not mistaken then. Here between these three individuals were concealed the elements of a tragic drama, ready to break loose at any time and take full toll of their happiness. I felt that they were spiritually pure but that the inexorable hand of Fate had touched them and that the sign of misfortune was already on their foreheads.

On the following day, while I was inspecting the work in the forest, I came upon Samsonoff, looking pale and with eyes that were red and tired. In unwonted silence he mechanically showed me over the piles of wood and went away. Then, near the ovens, I met Kazik and found him serious and thoughtful. Speaking in a trembling voice, he gave evidence of great agitation. In response to my question as to what the matter was, he answered, after considerable hesitation and musing :

" I had a painful conversation with Samsonoff and was frank with him, only to regret it later. I told him the truth, in which there was nothing bad or wrong. Samsonoff will not believe what I said and suspects the worst." As he finished, he pulled off his cap and threw it on the ground like an impetuous boy.

" You talked about Madame Vera ? " I asked.

He was too much roused and irritated to show astonishment over my question and answered without hesitancy :

" Yes, everyone can love or hate ! The only thing is not to act basely, sinfully or treacherously. Nothing threatens Samsonoff. He has also but to work, to study and to struggle, and he will surely reach the great, broad highroad of life before ever I do. Then his wife will not leave him. But, as it is, he only curses and suspects things which are not and never will be, all of which is bad, sir, very bad ! "

I realized fully that life had at present a foreboding aspect for my assistants, yet I seemed powerless to help them. Two days later I received a telegram, calling me to Harbin, where I spent about a week. On my return to Udzimi I was surprised and a little astonished to find that neither of my assistants came to meet me at the station. I proceeded directly to Ho Lin, where Kazik soon entered my car, pale and thin, with a feverish fire suffusing his eyes. Under his arm he had a portfolio full of papers and, in a dry official manner, began to make his report. He spoke without precision at times and exhibited much confusion, often rubbing his brow and licking his feverish lips.

As he opened his portfolio to show me some documents, I saw a Browning tucked away in it. Kazik laid it on a chair and began to hand me the papers. While I was glancing through these, the crash of a shot suddenly rent the air and a hot wave struck my face. I jumped, then became motionless with fright. Out of the momentary haze appeared the deadly pale face of Kazik, gazing at me with wide-open eyes full of despair. A mocking smile tightened his lips, baring his teeth, flecked with blood. But my attention was caught, not by this tragic mask, but by the breast of Kazik. He wore a red shirt, on which a dark stain was spreading. It was only a moment before the blood soaked through the material and began dropping to the floor. By the time I had recovered control of myself and had seated Kazik in an armchair, there was already

a telltale pool saturating the rug. As I cut his shirt open with my desk shears, I found that the bullet had entered his left breast just above his heart and, discovering no exit, naturally inferred that it had lodged against his shoulderblade. The left arm was cold and inert. I quickly applied a first dressing and telephoned the station to get in touch immediately with the nearest hospital. Fortunately a Red Cross Hospital had been established just the previous week at the next station along the line. In a few hours an ambulance car arrived and took Kazik away. The next day an operation was performed and the bullet extracted, leaving Kazik to struggle through long weeks with threatening death. Tuberculosis developed in the perforated lung, forcing him to remain in the hospital until the autumn and then to leave only for a Government health station in Russia. When I saw him off at the Harbin station, he was in a sad state with his left hand quite inert, hanging cold and motionless at his side. Continual and piercing pain was his lot, clearly reflected in the thin and almost transparent face with its pale and parched lips. He was coughing and smiled in a rather shamed manner, as he said good-bye to me just before the train started.

"This is the end of my dreams!"

When I tried to calm and cheer him, he only shook his head and repeated:

"No, sir, this is the end! I am a cripple and there is only one help for me now, only one." He looked beyond me where he seemed to find the infinite, and added slowly: "Death, only death!"

He went away. For one short second I saw once more his pale face and then it disappeared. I never saw it again and I never shall, for I learned a year later that Kazik had died of consumption in a hospital, lonely and poor, because as a cripple he could find no work and had long ago used up his meagre savings.

Now, when on the great tapestry of memory the rather unusual character of Kazik stands out before me, I cannot

really answer this question of how the accident in my car at Ho Lin actually occurred. While in hospital after the operation, Kazik averred that he struck the revolver by mistake, that it fell on the floor and went off. When I heard this, I recalled the pale, distorted face of Kazik before the accident and asked myself: "Was it not a suicide?" But Kazik took his secret with him to the grave.

It was not many weeks after the accident to Kazik that peace and happiness returned to the little home of the Samsonoffs. The young husband was gayer and more vivacious, while Madame Vera looked on him with more and more favour. They never spoke of Kazik; and, once when I tried to introduce the subject, they turned immediately to another topic. I realized with poignant force the ruthless and heartless law of animal and human nature. When Kazik was strong, full of enthusiasm for life, and dangerous, he was loved or hated: when the merciless bullet had robbed his body of its life-blood and strength, he was put out of the heart and of the thoughts as a spoiled and broken thing, of no use to anybody.

"Poor Kazik," I often thought, "where are your proud, bold plans and dreams? I wonder if, before your death, cold despair did not possess your stubborn soul?"

I was really rather glad when I heard of the death of this man, crippled and beyond hope of recovery. Death ended all his trials, his burdened life and his despair, and possibly also the persisting longing for her, who so quickly and easily banished him from her memory.

In the course of a few weeks Samsonoff resigned and returned to Harbin with his wife, who was tired of the jungle, where my ovens struggled with the virgin forest and devoured the bodies of the wood giants just as an extraneous accident devoured the life of Kazik. The human heart can be hard, indifferent and callous; and this is perhaps one unconsciously influencing reason why I do not like big human masses. I found new assistants and our automaton continued to devour.

CHAPTER VI

TIGERS AND "RED-BEARDS"

IN the meantime my Cossack, Rikoff, wandered day after day through the forest and always brought home with his game some interesting bits of news. He met suspicious-looking horsemen on Kentei Alin ; he was fired at several times and once returned with a perforated hunting bag. For a long time I received no answers to my telegrams regarding these armed bands wandering through our forest, but finally a large detachment of Cossacks was sent us and their scouring expeditions on the slopes of Kentei Alin yielded some unexpected results.

The Cossacks had some engagements with small detachments of *hunghutzes*, during which they captured several wounded men. These small groups belonged to a bigger body which, according to the captives, made headquarters near the Korean frontier and which had as its leader a certain Chang Tso-lin, who was proven to be in the pay of the Japanese General Staff. After the Cossacks' initial operations the *hunghutzes* disappeared almost entirely from our neighbourhood ; but one night the sound of crashing glass in my car wakened me with a start. I listened, but nothing further occurred. When I turned out in the morning, I found one of the windows shattered by a bullet which had lodged in the opposite wall of the car. It was a brass one from a carbine of large calibre, which my Cossacks recognized as a bullet used by the Chinese army. At first I could not fathom it at all and wondered whether the Chinese had declared war on Russia ; but the explanation soon appeared. The leader of the *hunghutzes*,

Chang Tso-lin, was in connivance with the Chinese Governors of the Provinces of Fengtien and Kirin and was being supplied by them with Government arms. When this fact was substantiated, the Chinese Viceroy of Manchuria was forced, as a result of Russian diplomatic representations, to resign and leave Moukden.

When the headman of Ho Lin heard of my night experience, he came to me and begged that I refrain from reporting it to the authorities, as he feared the *hunghutzes* might take vengeance on his villagers and also that they might try to do me harm, adding that they were already angry with me for having been instrumental in bringing the Cossacks to the place. I acquiesced in the request of the headman but, as a result of his warning and of some patent evidence of bad feeling on the part of certain natives around the works, I was always on guard and took the precaution never to go about without a revolver.

In the meantime the Army Staff demanded of me ever-increasing quantities of charcoal, which might not have been so bad if the railroad had not done the same, through their insistence that the various railway shops should all be supplied with charcoal. It pressed me hard to comply with these growing demands. Besides the Ural ovens three large brick ones were soon in full swing and a fourth was being constructed farther in the forest. In the area near the ovens the trees were already all cut off, so that our railway was kept very busy transporting the wood from the more distant parts of the concession. At the same time I ordered the construction of a new branch to the outlying forests, all of which forced me to take on new supplies of labourers. As it became impracticable to depend upon Harbin any longer for these increasing numbers, I had to engage whomsoever we could get in Ninguta, Imienpo and Kirin, where my assistants accepted everyone who asked for work without troubling about recommendations or guarantees, which were impossible to obtain under these conditions of speed and numbers.

Each day I visited all of the places where work was going on and personally inspected all the operations. Once, while superintending the construction of an oven on the fringe of the forest, I saw a black collar thrush (*Turdus torquatus*) rise with a sharp cry from some bushes near by, and having my shotgun in my hand, threw it up and dropped the bird. The Chinese, with their enthusiasm for some of the least-expected matters, raised their thumbs in praise of my performance and rushed into the bushes to bring out the spoils. After this the labourers left me little peace, bringing me, every time I appeared with my shotgun near a group of them in the woods, empty bottles and tins and asking me with signs to fire at them as they threw them into the air. They were much impressed with my ability to break the bottles and spatter the tins full of holes, and would clap their hands and jump about like children in their enjoyment of it all. It always seemed to me advisable not to refuse them this pleasure, as the performance served as a good warning to the *hunghutze* members of our labour gangs.

And I had no doubt that we had some of these brigands right among us from many little things that occurred. On one occasion Lisvienko reported the finding of arms as well as the unexplained disappearance of some of the men. Matters had come to a point where we dared not leave the ovens for a moment without protection and consequently had to keep a Cossack guard over them day and night. But the serious question always occurred to me: "What could this handful of soldiers surrounded by the Chinese mob really do, if the *hunghutzes* wished to seize our establishment?"

One Sunday I went out along the railroad track to inspect the work in an outlying section and was carrying with me my Henel carbine fitted with a telescope. It was noon, hot and clear, with no one around. The forest shut in the track with its two walls, silent and motionless. Suddenly I noticed a movement in the bushes about one hundred

yards ahead of me and saw that it was a wild boar, trying to extricate himself from a tangle of Virginia creepers and make his way to the track. As he finally broke through the brush, he scrambled up on the roadbed and headed right for me between the rails. The instant he sensed me and wheeled to make for cover again, presenting his whole flank for a target, I took advantage of the opportunity and rolled him down the ballast. When I came cautiously up to him, he was already dead. He was a beautiful specimen and weighed, as we found when we transported him to camp that evening, nearly five hundred pounds. He carried fine, large tusks, curving like two sickles high up over his snout.

It was that identical Sunday, when I had had such unusual luck, that Rikoff saddled his horse and went off for a very different kind of a hunt. I had not seen him before he left and only learned that he had gone into the mountains when Sergeant Lisvienko came and reported to me that Rikoff's horse had come in from the forest riderless, with broken reins and covered with foam. As something serious had evidently befallen the Cossack, we at once started out to search for him. When we did not find him at the outset, I offered a large reward to any one who should discover him; but he seemed to have disappeared like a stone in the sea. Only after three days did we secure any likely trace, when a Chinese beggar came in and reported having seen the bloody body of a Russian soldier near a little stream falling into the Ho Lin. Without many words Sergeant Lisvienko put the beggar into a saddle, mounted himself and ordered the man to lead the way. With two Cossacks I followed him. For a long time our unusual guide with his unusual transport wandered about in the forest, until we made out the rocky summit of Kentei Alin, when he dismounted and began searching among the bushes. He trudged back and forth several times across a marshy place overgrown with bushes and high grass, returning each time to the stream bank and

making back out over the open again, until finally he stopped and signalled us to come.

As we joined him, we saw a sad, heartrending picture ; for there on the grass, which was all trampled and in some places uprooted, lay Rikoff with his grey military blouse torn to shreds and soaked in blood. The moment we saw that his skull was smashed and his whole face covered with deep wounds, made by animal claws, we realized at once that he was the victim of a tiger. The beast of prey had very evidently tortured the man, as all the joints of the feet and the hands were twisted and bitten through. Also, as we found neither his cap nor his carbine anywhere near him but only his hunting knife close to his mangled right hand, it was evident that the tiger had first attacked him away from this spot and that the awful fight had been carried on and finished here. Examining carefully every inch of the ground near the scene of the final struggle, we found his cap at a distance of some fifty yards and a little farther on the broken carbine and could reconstruct the whole, terrible drama that had been enacted here without audience and without hope. It was clear that the tiger had suddenly attacked Rikoff, so that he had no time to shoot but had struck the beast with the stock of his carbine and broken it. Over a large area we found traces of an inexorable fight—trampled ground and coagulated blood on leaves and grass that marked the trail of the Cossack's last, tragic journey.

We were already preparing to raise him up and place him on one of the horses, when Lisvienko stopped thoughtfully and asked :

" But why is his knife still by his hand ? He was not the one to leave an enemy free when holding a knife in his hand. I want to have a further look about this place."

Saying this, he made a sign to one of the Cossacks, and the two of them, with their rifles ready, walked away. As the other Cossack and the beggar were helping me fasten the body of Rikoff on the spare horse, I could see the caps

of Lisvienko and his mate moving among the bushes. It was only a moment, however, before they both disappeared and shortly afterwards shouted to us to come and join them. I snatched my carbine and ran to them. What I saw surpassed anything I could have imagined. In a little forest meadow on trampled, tall grass lay the body of the tiger. His hide was pierced in several places with deep knife wounds and it was evident that he had been dead for a few days. When the Cossacks turned him over, I saw clearly enough what had ended the fight. His belly was slit and part of his entrails were on the grass. Palpably, after having lost so much blood from all his wounds, he left the arena and dragged himself away from his adversary, who, with his joints broken and his skull smashed by the terrible teeth, was passing his last moments on this forest plain, which had witnessed such an indescribably fierce and primitive contest between the man and the beast.

Through his sorrow Lisvienko still gave signs of pleasurable pride.

"He was a valiant lad," he said, with a shake of his head, "a true Cossack!"

Sadly we brought back to Ho Lin the body of Rikoff and the skin of the tiger. That same evening, after having written my short, official report on the matter, I sent the body of Rikoff to Harbin under the charge of Sergeant Shum and one of his men to report to his commanding officer and to take part in the burial services of their companion.

After I had despatched the body of Rikoff from Udzimi and had returned to Ho Lin, some one knocked at the door of my car. A Russian workman whom I did not know entered in response to my "Come in!" He was a type not infrequent in Russia, a mixture of Slav, Mongol and Tzigany—an old man with thick, grey hair, stiff as the bristles of a brush; with fiery, piercing black eyes, an eagle-like beak of a nose and thick, ruddy lips. He had a strange name, Zvon or Bell, and was a storekeeper in one of the

coal depots. Afterwards I learned from my assistant that he was a good, conscientious worker. On entering, he stood before me like a soldier at attention and, in a solemn voice, asked me to release him from duty. When I inquired his reasons, he hesitated and mumbled something incoherently.

"Come, speak your mind!" I said sternly.

"The fact is that, whenever I arrive in a new place, I always cast lots to know if everything will be favourable. . . ."

"Well?"

"The omens were very bad," he continued. "I tried fortune-telling with stones and found that they pointed to three deaths. Two have already gone—Kazik and Rikoff. . . ."

"Kazik is not dead," I interrupted, for at this time he was still alive and was in the sanatorium in Russia.

"He will die," the old man whispered with conviction. "I consulted the omens for him and the answer was that he will die."

"What is it then? Are you afraid for yourself?"

He thought for a moment and answered in a low voice:

"Certainly I am afraid, because death can strike everyone. We are in an alien, strange land, and our Cossacks cannot defend us, for they are too few. Yet I have not come here to ask you to release me, sir, since this could be done by the technical assistants. . . ."

Again I noticed the expression of trouble in his face.

"Then what is it you want?" I asked with a little impatience.

"I came to warn you, sir, for I read from the stones that a danger will soon threaten you. Perhaps, sir, you are to be this third one, unless you choose to leave here in time."

"Thank you for your warning and your advice," I answered, as I shook hands with him.

I learned on the following day that he had already left

and, not seeing him around as a reminder, I soon forgot all about his warning and continued in my regular way of life.

Just about this time I ordered my car moved out to a new branch of our railway and took along with me Lisvienko, two Cossacks and the soldier-porter. I was returning from an inspection of the track and some new work in the forest just as the sun was settling behind the mountains, when suddenly I heard a volley, followed immediately by a second one. On scanning the rocky ridge above us, I saw several riders who had dismounted and were shooting into my car and a small building put up for the railway men. The Cossacks and my soldier cook tumbled out at the first volley and immediately answered the fire with the skill and calmness of old soldiers accustomed to fighting *hunghutzes*. Some muffled cries reached us, as we saw a man or two fall and roll on the steep, bare rocks, while the others retreated over the summit. I ran into the car and snatched up my Mauser with the wooden case that can be attached to the handle to make of the weapon practically an automatic carbine with ten rounds. Joining my men, who were prone on one side of the railway embankment, I looked about for a target. One appeared unexpectedly in the person of a Chinese who came riding round a shoulder of rock, mounted on a white horse. As he was gesticulating and giving orders to others of the brigands who gathered near him from both directions, we felt sure that he was the leader. He stood out strongly in the last rays of the setting sun, and Lisvienko, watching him, whispered across to me :

“ We shall make an end of him ! ”

“ All right,” I replied, as I laid my aim.

In response to our two shots, which rang almost simultaneously, both rider and horse went down. The now frightened *hunghutzes* retreated, carrying their leader with them and urged along by our continuing fire.

The boldness of these banditti induced me to send in

a very definite report to the General Staff, urging the necessity of delivering the neighbourhood of Ho Lin and Udzimi from these *hunghutze* bands. Yielding to my request, they despatched two days later from the nearest large station a strong detachment of Cossacks under the command of a captain, which at once began scouring the forest as far as Kentei Alin. They met, however, only small groups of the brigands and succeeded in making prisoners of all of them. The nearest Chinese official, accompanied by a guard and by executioners, came to take over charge of the prisoners and to pass judgment upon them. He had the brigands all chained together, carried them along to Imienpo and summarily executed them.

Before their departure, however, the brigands spent a night in a small building where the tools of the labourers were kept during non-working hours. Late in the evening Lisvienko came to me and proposed that we go to have a look at the *hunghutzes*, adding:

"You will see, sir, what sort of people they are. In spite of the fact that they know the executioner will tomorrow lop off their heads, they calmly play games and laugh and joke. They are wooden puppets, not human beings!" he concluded, as he spat in disgust and anger.

As we opened the door, we found the *hunghutzes*, with their feet encased in heavy, individual wooden stocks, sitting around a small smoking oil lamp playing dominoes and punctuating their careless laughter with wild gesticulations. After glancing at us in a mocking manner, they turned back and continued their evidently entertaining conversation. Lisvienko, knowing Chinese, translated for me some of these veritable "gallows jokes."

One of the prisoners, who was stout and very ruddy, seemed to find reason for twitting the others and plenty of material for laughter in the fact that the executioner would be likely to find a great deal of real difficulty with his neck, as he would never be able to sever it with a single

stroke ; while those of the others would be easy going for him, as they were all thin and as emaciated as smoked fish.

Early the next morning we watched these callous jesters with the chains on their necks marching away to Udzimi, from where they were to make their final journey to the execution grounds.

After this combined work of the Cossacks and the officials, I thought that we should have no further trouble in our concession, but I found, unfortunately, that I was mistaken. No sooner had the Cossack detachment left than word came in to me that a gang of *hunghutzes* had attacked a small store of flour and beans well into the forest, robbed it and burned it down. Almost every day the Cossacks were fired upon by this invisible enemy, which lay in wait everywhere, behind bushes in the undergrowth, behind the great rocks which had in past ages rolled down from the mountain cliffs and even from cover near the forest operations or around the plant itself. With our limited forces it was impossible to capture these snipers, whose boldness grew with each succeeding escapade.

CHAPTER VII

THE TREASURE AND TOLL OF THE FOREST

ONE day I was sitting in my car reading the newspaper accounts of further Russian disasters, when Lisvienko entered, saluted and asked :

" May I make a report, sir ? "

" Go ahead," I replied.

" Bad news, sir ! I feel that I understand now whence come these assaults and constant difficulties with the *hunghutzes*." He came nearer and continued in a whisper :

" Every day I make the round of all the patrols. This morning, when I was riding along the bank of the Ho Lin to the new cutting, I caught the sound of shod hoofs on stones and in a moment made out a horseman riding rapidly toward the mountains. Though the man wore a Chinese cap and *ma kua-tzu* (short jacket), he had below these red trousers and riding boots with spurs and carried a carbine. I am sure he was a Japanese cavalryman."

I jumped to my feet at this news and questioned his statement.

" No, sir," he answered decidedly, " I have too keen sight to have been mistaken. I have decided to follow this matter up to-day, as I remember exactly the direction the Japanese took. There are some small Chinese opium plantations in that section of the mountains and I intend to scout them out."

" Whom will you take with you ? "

" Nobody, for I am afraid the young soldiers will babble before the Chinese and thus spoil the game. I shall go alone, as though I were hunting."

I thought a moment and told him that I would go with him, which evidently pleased him very much.

"It will be much more agreeable for me. I thank you humbly, sir."

Soon we crossed the river together and entered the woods. After going some distance we found the hoof-prints of a single horse on a marshy road that wound among the bushes.

"If I could only meet him!" Lisvienko mumbled, as he followed the tracks. "He would not escape me, as he did at first, when I was afraid to shoot for fear of frightening the bird. When he gets tame, I shall certainly bag him."

We rode single file, peering into the forest all around and occasionally stopping to listen. Nothing indicated the presence of any human being. Somewhere a thrush sang and from the depths of the forest came the tapping of a woodpecker; a stream gurgled along over its stony path.

After wandering for a long time through the woods we came upon two Chinese houses surrounded with poppy fields, in which two Chinese with their sunflower-like straw hats worked among the ripening seed pods. As we came up to them, Lisvienko asked whether any people had recently passed the settlement. The information he received was evidently very important, for his eyes flashed and he led right off to the other side of the clearing, where we again entered the thick wood before he stopped to translate for me what the Chinese had told him. As we almost at once emerged again into a more open place, where a fire had recently cut a path through the forest, I felt instinctively that I was being watched from somewhere. Following along behind the sergeant, I had had scarcely time to realize my impression and act upon it, when a shot split the silence of the woods and the tenseness of our nerves. Lisvienko went down with a curse, pressing his hand over his hip. I do not remember how I found myself

behind a tree, looking out. At some distance away, just beyond the farther edge of the burned-over ground, I caught sight of a Japanese cavalryman in the act of throwing the cartridge from his carbine. He had not time to complete his reloading before my own bullet sent him down. At almost the same instant another shot rang out on the right, where I saw a second horseman riding off at full speed. Though he was far from me, I sent several shots after him from my Henel before he entirely disappeared. When everything had been quiet for a time, I carefully scouted out the place and discovered the saddled horse of the fallen man tied to a tree. I led him to Lisvienko, whom I found sitting up and still pressing his bleeding hip with his hand. A careful inspection of his wound left little doubt but that the bone was smashed. After dressing the injury as well as I could, I succeeded with great difficulty in placing him in the saddle and in conveying him back to my car.

And thus one more victim went from Ho Lin to the Red Cross hospital to complete the fatal trio foretold by Zvon. The sergeant developed blood-poisoning and died in great pain.

After this, Sergeant Shum from Udzimi took command of the Cossacks in Ho Lin. Then, as a result of my report on this incident, a squadron of dragoons were sent us and scouted over the whole of the Kentei Alin, as well as the range of Loye Lin. On their way they fought and dispersed several large bands of *hunghutzes*, returned to the valley of the Mutan and worked back along its course to Ninguta, but nowhere in their circling movement discovered any Japanese. After this, comparative calm reigned in our little world; the Chinese became obedient and worked well; and nothing indicated the presence of these banditti, who brought really more trouble and disorder than danger into our midst.

Profiting by these peaceful conditions, several naturalist friends of mine, who were able to secure short leave from

their duties in the army, joined me in making excursions into the forest round about. As my companions were not hunters, our expeditions had an entirely peaceful character, but were far from devoid of lively interest; for, roaming these Manchurian forests, we found quite a number of curious specimens of the flora and fauna of the region.

On the fringe of a small marsh, where nearly every bush hid a snipe or a yellow-leg, one of my friends stopped and began examining closely a small clump of moss. After inspecting it for a considerable time, he turned to us and said:

"This is a very rare species of moss, supposed to be found only on the north and south slopes of the Himalayas and commonly called 'holy moss,' though its botanical designation is *Cassiope tetragona*. The Buddhists use it in the manufacture of liturgical candles, twisting it into wicks which they dip in resin or wax, and adding as perfume either sandalwood, vanilla or saffron. When lighted, they burn very slowly, until the last bit of resin or wax has been entirely consumed. The moss is a natural punk."

We dried some of the plant near a fire and experimented with it. The first good spark we could get from striking a knife against a stone lighted this unusual tinder, which continued to burn slowly until it was totally consumed. The next day our botanist, while following through a deep, heavily shaded gorge, with a cry of pleasure bent down and pulled up a plant by the roots. It had long, quite pointed serrate leaves, not unlike those of the white elm. When we had cleaned the root, we found it bore an uncanny resemblance to a human body with the head, neck, trunk, legs and arms clearly defined, and we recognized at once the fabulous root of Asia, called by the Chinese "*ginseng*," by the Mongolians "*fatil*," by the Persians "*mandragora*" and in the Latin "*panacea ginseng*."

We tasted the root and found it sharp, peppery as ginger

and pricking to the tongue. We searched through all the gorge and on the adjacent mountain slopes but could not discover a second specimen. After our fruitless quest we realized how difficult the search for this lonely root could be, especially with its attendant possibilities of attack by tigers. The faithful Buddhist or the follower of Lao-tze has before him, when he goes to hunt for the magic root, still one more encounter, that with the evil demon who defends the precious plant.

A few days afterward, during an excursion to the eastern slopes of the Chang-Kuan-Tsai Lan, just before sunset we were making our way along a stony road that was endeavouring to fit itself to the twists and turns of a winding stream. Suddenly a disagreeable odour, like the smell of sweating horses, struck us, growing rapidly heavier and more obnoxious. As though by magic, I was instantly transported back to a journey I had made through the Caucasus along the shores of the Black Sea, during which this same pungent odour had once enveloped me. We then discovered the source of the smell to be a worm of the species *Julus*, of a milky-pink colour, nearly four inches in length and having its habitat in decaying leaves. When the *Julus* senses danger, it emits a few drops of fluid having this extremely powerful and disagreeable odour, and serving to frighten off the enemies of the worm, such as birds, moles and snakes. I remember how Dr. N. S. Abaza, with whom I made this journey in the Caucasus, told me that birds will forsake the places defended by these *Julus* through their ingeniously manufactured poisonous gas. My friend and teacher, Professor Zaleski, also found some of these worms and, after studying the fluid secreted by them, pronounced it to be musk. This fluid, musk, which is a result of physiological activities of certain rodents and of some species of bucks, has, when fresh, a disagreeable odour and only after a long exposure to the air takes on valuable aromatic qualities which have won for it a place in the perfume industry. Professor Zaleski, essentially

unique and original in many of his reactions, went so far as to fabricate perfumes from the *Julus* fluid ; and, although no one claimed for them rivalry with the products of Houbigant, Coty and Piver, it is not recorded that they frightened any one away from the individuals who used them.

Once we were within the protective zone of this Manchurian *Julus*, we began searching for the worm and finally found him attached to the bark of a young elm. He resembled closely his far-away Caucasian relative but carried on his pinkish-white back several brown spots. Having with us no suitable equipage in which so talented a member of the lowly order of larvæ should travel and fearing that too intimate contact with the frightened worm would make us objects of aversion to everybody, we went away and left in peace this peripatetic factory of perfume and poison gas.

After this excursion my friends spent several days more with me, during the last of which the *hunghutzes* once again reminded us of their existence, when a Chinese, who had come from Harbin to pay the workers, was captured on his way to the barracks and disappeared forever, without leaving a single trace. At the same time a labourers' barracks out in one of the distant corners of the concession was attacked by a band that wounded the Cossack on guard and took all the savings of the Chinese workmen. Immediately following upon this about two hundred of the men asked to be released, and I was obliged to go to Harbin to find new workers and to ask again for an increase in our patrol.

On my arrival I noticed a great deal of nervous unrest in the official and civilian circles of the town. The previous hopeful attitude and the confidence in ultimate victory had undergone a marked change. The Russian colony at this great centre, having faith in the power of their State, had accepted quietly and calmly the blows dealt by the Japanese to the bottled fleet at Port Arthur and

had retained their belief that the army would achieve success on the land. Even when the Japanese torpedoed and sank the cruiser *Petropavlovsk* right under the forts and thus took the life of the brave Admiral Makaroff, not only held in high esteem by his countrymen as a talented and bold seaman but also well known as an Arctic explorer, the patriotic public still remained calm. However, after the defeat of the Russian forces at Chiu Lien Ch'eng on the Yalu and the continuous northward retreat of both flanks of the long Russian line in southern Manchuria, the confidence of the public began to weaken. In Chinchou on the Liaotung Peninsula the Japanese captured strong positions from the Russians and began the pressing movement that forced the army of General Fok to retreat to Port Arthur, which had already been cut off from contact with the forces of General Kuropatkin that were now being concentrated at Liaoyang. Even though the Russian Press and the orders of General Kuropatkin still carried a proud and confident tone, the public awaited with great uncertainty and no little concern the first great battle with the three Japanese armies which were advancing on Liaoyang under the commands of Generals Oku, Nodzu and Kuroki.

I had reached Harbin after the battle of Wa Fang Kou, where the Japanese stopped the corps of General Count Stackelberg, who was endeavouring to break through and carry aid to Port Arthur. One heard the indignant comment everywhere that General Stackelberg had his wife with him at the front and also a special car with a cow, and that on hot days he did not leave his headquarters car, which he kept cool and comfortable by having soldiers continually deluge it with buckets of cold water. Of course it was useless to look for great victories from such a leader. When the Japanese, as was to be expected, stopped and dispersed his force, the Count escaped with difficulty and joined the army of Kuropatkin.

After this calamity the Russian civil population in the east was much depressed, but the newspapers and the Staff continued to deceive and mislead the public, so that a very large element of it did not know the real truth about the events in the war area. Fresh troops were daily arriving in Manchuria to augment the forces of Kuropatkin. As a sad welcome to these, I found in Harbin that all the hospitals were filled with sick and wounded and that the Staff was constantly opening new ones, even closing schools and commandeering their buildings for this purpose.

After having completed my business in town, I returned to Udzimi and found everything as I had left it, save that Sergeant Shum confidentially informed me that numerous bands of *hungtuzes* had again appeared in the neighbourhood and that it had been learned that disguised Japanese soldiers were among them. With this warning in mind, I decided not to venture away from the immediate territory of our operations, the more so because I had now no shooting companion.

On my return I was greatly pleased with the appearance of our establishment, for it was already a real factory, employing about one thousand men. Two railroads transported the supplies of wood, while the staff houses, labourers' barracks, stores and shops made up a whole town that had sprung up here in the forest near the quite unknown village of Ho Lin, which had now come to be a suburb of my charcoal town.

But it was not ordained of Fate that I was long to enjoy the pleasurable contemplation of my new city. No man knows what the morrow will bring him—a fact which seems to me to be the best justification for optimism and altruism and which is really the great attraction of life, which thus always remains a riddle. In this connection I never shall forget the words of a fellow-prisoner, when we were serving sentences, mine for revolution and his for burning the house of an enemy :

"To-morrow is never like to-day. If life is difficult to-day, it will be easier to live to-morrow. If to-morrow be worse, then to-day one is already a little accustomed to difficulty and will not suffer so much from the change for the worse. If to-morrow be successful, it will seem a magnificent day."

Then this philosophy of life, held and pronounced by a man sentenced to long years of prison, seemed repellent to me ; but now I feel that he was quite right.

I remember, as though it were only yesterday, July 20th, 1905, when the application of the above dictum came in my own life. It was half-past four in the morning when some one knocked at the door of my car, which my orderly opened. Just after I had looked at my watch and was trying to catch the conversation, the man came in and reported :

"A Chinese has arrived, breathless from running, and wants to see you at once, sir."

"Let him come in."

A labourer came in and, in broken Russian, began telling me excitedly about an accident which had occurred at one of the ovens.

"As we started taking out the coal, your assistant, Chief, with two labourers was on the top of the oven, when suddenly it caved in and let the men down into the fire. Come, Chief, come quickly, because every one has lost his head !"

Such terror and despair were pictured in the face of the Chinese that I realized something dreadful had occurred. I jumped up, and, after directing the orderly to telephone to Udzimi for a doctor and nurses, I ran from the car without a coat and without arms, following closely upon the heels of the Chinese. In the village everything was still. As we passed one of the Cossacks on guard near the stores of charcoal, I shouted directions to him to send the sergeant and the remaining Cossacks to the place of the accident. I was wearing high boots over my trousers and a white

shirt, in the left breast-pocket of which I was carrying a small but rather thick notebook. When we had run for about half a mile and had rounded a curve which took us out of sight of the little town, we came upon two Chinese seated near the track. Just as we drew abreast of them they rose and asked my guide something which I did not understand. Immediately he answered them, they jumped up and started to run along beside us. Then, suddenly and without the least warning, the two men grabbed my arms and tried to throw me. They gave no heed to my command to let go but only tightened their grips in silence and tried the harder to bring me down. All this time I had no idea what they were up to until I saw my Chinese labourer-guide swing round and make for me with a knife in his hand. With my arms held down so that I could not defend myself, I could only watch as he thrust at me but fortunately struck the notebook, which took enough of the weight of the blow so that only the point of the blade entered my breast. I gave a tremendous lunge, that pulled me out of the clutches of the two men, but in the meantime was struck again by the labourer in my left hand and wounded rather badly. My jerk had been successful, although the two men had so entangled their feet with mine that only my upper body was free. As I hammered them in my further efforts to extricate myself, their hold on my feet lessened; but I had then immediately to turn back against the labourer, who was once more making at me with his knife. With all my force I kicked him in the upper part of the belly so hard that I sent him down with a cry of pain. In falling he dropped his knife, struck the rail and rolled down the ballast embankment. Though the two men in the interval had regained control and were trying to pin my arms once more, I succeeded a second time in freeing my right hand and struck one of them under the chin, overturning him in a dazed condition but falling myself from the force of my effort and landing across him.

Fortunately for me, my third assailant, seeing the fate of his two companions and suffering himself from the lesser attentions I had bestowed upon his facial target, ran off without attempting to give further assistance to his associate. What made it so really unfortunate for me was the fact that, in falling, I had caught my foot under the rail and had twisted my leg so badly that I fainted. It was afterwards ascertained that I had seriously wrenched the hip joint.

It was probably only a few minutes before Shum and the Cossacks found me and restored me to consciousness with the cold water from the ditch. Then two of the soldiers placed me on their carbines and carried me back to my car, a very different-looking object from the hurrying form that had left it so shortly before. After roping the two men near me, Shum started off with his other Cossacks in search of the third fellow, whom they located in the bushes by the tracks he had made on leaving the railway embankment.

I had little thought, when ordering the doctor and nurses for the victims of the trumped-up accident, that I was arranging for myself. Soon the injured hip was bandaged, the wounds in my breast and hand dressed and I lay still, waiting for Shum to return and giving directions to my assistants, as the doctor had announced that he would take me this same day to Harbin for proper treatment. Shum soon came back and reported to me :

“ The Chinese who lay on the track is dead with a smashed jaw and some teeth out. The second one, who rolled off the track, cannot sit up, and I put him, together with the man we caught in the bushes, under guard in the barracks. I have already sent for the Chinese official, directing that he bring an executioner with him.”

These were Shum's arrangements ; but it turned out that the executioner had only to deal with one individual, as the other died in the course of the day from his injuries.

And in this way my work in Udzimi came to an end. I returned there no more, for I remained in bed at Harbin for some weeks. Even after getting up I was forced to use a crutch and was in constant pain; and the effects of my fight with the *hunghutzes* stayed by me for a long time in the form of rheumatism in my injured leg and hip.

CHAPTER VIII

THE STAINÉD ALTAR OF WAR

AS soon as I could get about, I went at once to my laboratory in Harbin, where, according to the report of my assistant, an engineer, there was a big accumulation of important work and problems. The Staff of the Army and the Railway Administration had submitted numerous samples of different varieties of coal which had been found by Chinese throughout northern Manchuria. Though I was able to help my engineers and the young chemists with the analyses and other tasks, work was still very fatiguing for me in my weakened condition.

I was keenly absorbed in the news from the front. These first days of the great battle of Liaoyang passed in ominous silence, while the bulletins from General Kuropatkin's headquarters dwelt upon several strategic movements of the army but gave little or no information about the battle itself. In the meantime my Chinese servants told me in secret that the Russians were retreating along the whole front and that the Japanese were working round to the west to cut the railway line in the rear and to capture Harbin. This same day a friend of mine, who had just returned from a hunting expedition in the vicinity of Harbin, told me that he had seen fortifications being prepared not far from the city along the bank of the Sungari and said that it was very evident the Staff was preparing for possible eventualities here, an opinion that tended to confirm the report of my Chinese. Soon disheartening news began to filter through, showing that Kuropatkin and his Staff had with-

drawn to Moukden and that the army was in retreat along the whole front. Finally an official bulletin appeared and carried the laconic statement that a strategic realignment of the army was being made on positions near Moukden. But the real truth could not be concealed and caused a panic among the population, as the news spread through the town. The details, coming later, showed that the Russian losses had amounted to twenty thousand and that, although the Japanese also lost heavily, the Russians had really to sacrifice chosen strategic and fortified positions for an entirely new line. Also the Staff had no suitable hospitals at Moukden, so that the wounded had all to be transported farther north to Harbin.

How well I remember one sad morning ! I had left my house early and was making my way across the Place in front of the Cathedral on the way to my laboratory. The sun was just coming up, and the shadows of the night still lingered in the angles of the roofs behind the massive corners of the church and in the hedges and bushes around the Place. No passers-by were visible ; one heard no rattlings of the droskies over the protruding stones of the awful pavements of the city. But, as I turned out of the Place, I heard something which brought me to a halt to listen. From somewhere, as though up out of the earth, there was borne in upon me a long wail, full of pain and despair, growing ever more distinct and increasing in volume. I went on, feeling that something terrible, something unforgettable, was about to occur. As I passed beyond the hedges, my eye was struck with long rows of white tents with the Red Cross flag above them, which had come as ghosts during a night when such a mass of wounded had been brought in that the hospitals, numerous as they were, could no longer hold them. It was from these tents that the wail of the wounded rolled out to crush the soul. The white figures of the doctors and the nurses moved silently and swiftly in the soft morning light, at once mysterious and terrible in their white uniforms

spotted with blood. At intervals they entered the tents and brought out the dead, placing them on a long, flat wagon and continuing with their gory stretchers down another tented street.

Though many years have passed since that depressing morning, I remember it as though it were but yesterday. It was a field of human torture and despair, sown by the lavish hand of the scarlet spectre of War.

I know that war is an inevitable phenomenon in the physical life of peoples; but it is a phenomenon terrible and crying for revenge unto Heaven. Though I am a man of action and have seen war eye to eye, fighting for causes which I could comprehend and for which I could take the risk of the sacrifice, I cannot help being moved when I see masses of men flung into the jaws of death without this comprehension of, and sympathy with, the purposes of the war, which is often waged for material aims, for Mammon alone, asking from men victims without number and a sea of blood and giving them in return only wounds and crippled bodies for life, too often without the arms with which Nature has provided them to meet their struggle for existence.

CHAPTER IX

STALKED AND STALKING

CONDITIONS and events in Manchuria did not permit me to remain idle for long, though I was still very lame and had unfortunately become a subtle barometer for the registration of every change in the weather. An approaching storm, the rise and fall in the atmospheric pressure, any sudden change in temperature, rain or cold wind—all these occasioned more or less severe pains in my injured hip. However, war has her exigencies, which in this case forced me to discontinue my cure sooner than the medical art could possibly sanction.

A few days after the defeat at Liaoyang I received orders to institute a search for coal in the neighbourhood of Harbin, and to make careful analyses of any deposits found to ascertain whether they would be suitable for locomotive use. The cause of the urgency of the orders was the fact that, through the defeats at Liaoyang and on the Liaotung Peninsula, Russia had lost a number of good coal-mines, especially the very productive and valuable one at Fushun. Two skilled miners, specialists in drilling, a good drill and thirty Chinese workers were immediately put at my disposal. A small steamer loaded all my expedition and its belongings, consisting of our food supplies, pumps, tools, pyroxylin and a quantity of timber, as it was very difficult along the river above Harbin to secure adequate lumber supplies at short notice.

As rapidly as possible I completed my liquidation of the Udzimi works by turning over to the young engineer who had been appointed to succeed me all the records

and directions for carrying on the operations. Then I received from the doctor minute instructions, as he gave me powders and salves, grumbling all the time that I was going out only to lose my foot, because, according to him, there was a chronic inflammation of the wrenched joint threatening.

Our first search for coal began about fifteen miles from Harbin, at a place where some low, bare hillocks came down to the river, as I had an entry in my notebook that coal had been secured from there during the building of the Chinese Eastern Railway. Going to reconnoitre with my technical helpers, I soon found in deep gorges among the hills outcrops of thin layers of coal. We wandered about for a long time, until the sun had already begun to sink behind the hills, when we came upon a deep gulch dividing the whole range into two chains. Though the purple shadows already claimed the gulch, I decided to enter it and investigate, even though only superficially, its steeply sloping sides to find the place from which the coal had been taken some years before. As we crossed the gulch, an ever-thickening twilight began to envelop us, and from some unseen hiding-place crawled out spectres, serpentine-like creatures of hazy mist, which massed together to form a floating curtain that shut off the ravine from our view. Suddenly, in the distance, a tiny light gleamed, and after a moment a sound like a stifled cry reached our ears.

"There must be a *fang-tzu* in the gulch," observed one of the miners; and, placing his hands to his mouth, he shouted, "Eh-ho! *Man-tzu*, come here!"

Only the echo answered his call. We carried on and soon discovered traces of a fire, where small pieces of coal were still smouldering but the larger lumps were cold and wet from the water very recently poured over them to put out the fire.

"Somebody has put the fire out in a hurry," whispered one of the miners. "Evidently they were not anxious to receive unexpected guests."

We listened very attentively, but not the slightest sound came to us to betray the presence of any human beings.

"They have hidden themselves well," remarked Rusoff, one of the miners, with a laugh.

As the light was rapidly fading, we decided to turn back ; and, on emerging from the gulch, heard the dismal creaking of a Chinese cart, this unusual vehicle whose great wooden axle turns with the wheels and carries on two points of contact the whole weight of the load. We set our course by the sound and soon discovered a Chinese unmercifully lashing his team of four ponies that were struggling to pull an immense load of kaoliang stalks through the ruts and holes of a typically impossible Manchurian highway. When we asked the inhuman carter about the coal, he promised, for a good price, to show us on the following morning the remains of former shafts in the hills. We consequently decided to spend the night in the near-by village, whither the Chinese was bound with his kaoliang stalks, and to go with him at dawn to the abandoned shafts.

Our guide lodged us in his house on the inevitable *k'ang*, where the fleas at once began their assault upon us, but this time for our salvation. Turning on this bed of torture, I could not sleep at all, though my miners, long inured to this feature of Manchurian life, dozed soundly. On the end of the *k'ang* our host snored away, harmoniously accompanied by all his relatives. I did not know what time it was, when the watchdog barked and then immediately became silent. In a moment the door opened softly and three Chinese entered in crouching attitudes. I recognized at once that they were *hunghutzes*, as they were armed with carbines and with knives, carried, in keeping with the Mongolian custom, under their belts at the back. Stealthily they went along the *k'ang*, looking into the face of each of the sleepers, and making signs to one another with their hands. By the reddish glare of the smoking oil lamp I had a good look at them and could

see clearly that they were elderly men with dark, threatening faces.

When they had inspected everybody and everything in the room, they began to undress, placing their carbines in the corner opposite me and taking off their long outer coats, so that they had on only the regular blue Chinese trousers and short jackets. Then they sat down on a log of wood that was lying near the door and began whispering among themselves. I watched our unexpected guests very carefully, although they were really not dangerous for the three of us with our excellent Mausers and Nagan revolvers. But one had to be cautious; and, after the assault in Ho Lin, I not only had no sympathy for their ilk but also wanted to capture them and hand them over to the Cossack escort guarding our steamer.

I felt sure that this would not be possible without some shooting and, consequently, began to elaborate a plan of assault. Just at this point events took quite an unexpected turn and altered all of my strategic plans. In the middle of the *k'ang* there was a small box, belonging to one of the miners, Gorloff, and containing three cups, spoons, a carton of sugar and a glass jar with tea. We had taken tea in the evening and had left the open box standing there on the *k'ang*. One of the *hunghutzes*, in scouting about, discovered the sugar and put his dirty hand down into it. In a flash I seized my boot, that was lying at my feet, shied it with all my force at the fellow and shouted at the same time:

"Out of there, you thief! Wake up, wake up!"

My companions jumped to their feet, not understanding what the trouble was but pulling out their guns to be ready for anything. At this sudden turn of affairs the *hunghutzes* were caught off their guard, ran out into the yard and made off amid the barking of the dogs without even trying to come back and salvage their equipment. Through this we gained three carbines, three cartridge belts, three knives and as many Chinese long coats with

their girdles of ordinary black cloth. We gave the knives and the gowns to our host and, armed with the carbines, started out at dawn under his leadership for the ravine.

The Chinese took us directly to the mouth of an abandoned shaft, partially closed with earth and stones that had slid down into it. Finding so quickly what we were searching for, I immediately despatched Rusoff to the village to secure a horse and hurry to the steamer to bring back the men, the tools and the pyroxylin needed to blow up the rocks that had choked the entrance to the working. Meanwhile, we two went farther along, and the Chinese showed us several entrances to old shafts, the examination of which tended to prove to me conclusively that work had been carried on here simultaneously in several places. We found in some of the gradually descending galleries remnants of plank and beam timbering. With our geologist's hammer and a small pick we took out a few samples and found, on bringing them to the light, that externally they indicated the coal to be a lignite, or brown coal, very similar to the deposits I had seen in the Ussurian country.

We had already spent some hours in the gulch, when suddenly the Chinese, who had been wandering around the hillsides, ran to us and reported in an excited manner that he had seen smoke issuing from one of the shaft openings farther along. I took it for granted that the coal was probably burning and was very much annoyed over this possibility, as it would make working operations dangerous and, perhaps, even impossible.

As we approached the shaft and saw a thin stream of smoke issuing from it, I realized, just as soon as I smelled it, that it was not coal smoke but that of wood, and jumped at once to the conclusion that there must be some one within the gallery. Recalling the traces of the hastily extinguished fire we had discovered the evening before, I felt that the matter invited further investigation. Prompted by this thought, we entered the gallery and found that it was high enough to permit us to walk in

it, if we bent our heads slightly. Soon the darkness shut us in and, as we continued our advance by striking matches, calling to one another to keep in touch, suddenly a deafening roar pulled us up. Reverberation swelled it into thunder, as it was repeated a second, third and even a fourth time.

"Shooting!" cried Gorloff, as the Chinese ran howling to the entrance. I ordered Gorloff to call out in both Russian and Chinese that whoever was there should stop shooting and come to meet us. To this the only answer was another volley, which, however, did us no damage. Evidently the denizens of the mine were shooting somewhere in a side gallery to frighten us and were afraid to expose themselves in the main shaft.

"Are they *hunghutzes*?" Gorloff asked the Chinese, when we had reassembled at the entrance.

"No, Captain," answered the Chinese with conviction. "Whatever *hunghutzes* appear in our neighbourhood come in from a long distance, roam about and depart. None of them would be bold enough to try to live in this cavern, which is inhabited by bad spirits and the *ta lung* (great dragon). These must be *mao-tze* . . . foreigners," he corrected himself, using the polite word instead of this other uncomplimentary term so common in northern Manchuria, at the same time watching us with fear to see whether we had taken offence at his slip.

"We shall wait for the arrival of Rusoff and the men," I interpolated to the miner. "We must unravel this riddle and smoke these badgers out."

While we were awaiting our reinforcements, we posted ourselves near the mouth of the shaft, at the same time keeping close guard over it to prevent the bad spirits and the dragon from leaving their nests. After a little, more volleys were fired from the depths of the shaft, the bullets coming whistling out of the mouth and warning us that our captives wanted to emerge. When we answered with a few shots, again things quieted down without any one appearing where we could see them in the sloping gallery.

To while away the time as we waited, Gorloff took it upon himself to explain to the Chinese at some length that our trapped game could not be bad spirits and dragons.

"Listen, you son of Han," he started, waving his immense red hand before the nose of the Chinese, "these are no bad spirits or other fabulous creatures of yours; for, if spirits had possessed carbines, we should already three thousand years ago have had no Chinese on this earth. They would all have been exterminated by the evil spirits! Do you understand?"

In evident appreciation of this dissertation and of the facts behind it the Chinese showed a fine set of immense, yellow teeth and nodded his head in pleasure. He apparently preferred to deal with men armed with carbines than with unassailable and always treacherous spirits.

It was not until a little before noon that we heard the voices of approaching people and among these recognized the deep bass tones of Rusoff's laugh. He soon appeared with two Cossacks and ten of the Chinese workmen, carrying the pyroxylin, spades, pumps and picks.

"We must take food before the battle!" insisted Gorloff. "The sun is already high in the heavens."

We finished quickly our meal of tea, bread and conserve, as we were all anxious to see the solution of the mystery in the shaft. Leaving the Chinese in a safe place under the charge of one of the older workmen, we five foreigners again approached the mouth of the shaft. Rusoff first crawled into the gallery, and, in his resounding bass, summoned the unknown garrison of the subterranean fortress to surrender, promising them liberty and assuring them that we sought entrance into their fastness only for the purpose of studying the coal and not for pursuing them. After repeating his proposals once more in Chinese, he crawled back out of the shaft and concealed himself behind a heap of stones at the mouth. For some minutes after this silence reigned in the cavern, only to be broken by another carbine volley and the cries of several men, as

our elves made bold for an attack. In answer we began shooting into the shaft and kept it up for a considerable time. We could tell that our intangible enemy was in retreat, as the voices now sounded from a greater distance down the shaft.

"What shall we do with these gentlemen?" asked Rusoff. "How long shall we wait for them to come out?"

"Not very long," I answered. "Tell them that if they do not leave their arms inside and come promptly out, I shall blow up the shaft and give them a magnificent and noisy burial."

Laughing and greatly pleased with his commission, Rusoff shouted in the new warning, which simply drew a new volley out of the depths.

"Gorloff, take the smallest charge of pyroxylin, fasten a detonator and a Bickford fuse to it for a quick explosion, and throw the whole thing into the shaft as an initial warning to these mountain spirits."

As the skilful miner quickly executed my command, the pyroxylin exploded with a deafening roar and threw from the shaft opening, as though it were the muzzle of a great cannon, clouds of dust, vapour and gas intermingled with small stones and earth.

"That is only a start," thundered Rusoff. "Come out or in five minutes we shall destroy the entrance to the gallery. Be quick, you badgers!"

Our strategy proved successful, for soon we heard a voice from the gallery and negotiations began.

"Who are you?" was the first word from our invisible cliff dwellers.

"We are for the moment ourselves. You first tell who you are," Rusoff roared back at them.

"We are Georgians," was the unexpected and astonishing reply.

"Why do you stay in a hole like badgers?" returned Rusoff.

"Well, it has pleased us so to do," answered the voice

from below; and I perceived in it the hidden laugh which never leaves a man born in the mountains of the Caucasus.

"Will you come out or are we to bury you, because it pleases us so to do?" I queried.

After a short interval of silence the voice sounded nearer.

"Will you allow us to go free or will you arrest us? If you seek to arrest us, we shall ourselves blow up the mine."

"Evidently you have deserved prison," I observed.

"N-o-o," drawled he, "but there have been misunderstandings"; and again I detected the note of mirth in the voice of the Georgian.

"If you will leave your arms in the gallery and will not make trouble, you can go to the four winds, so far as we are concerned."

"Then we shall come out."

"I know that a Georgian can be true to his word," I shouted back to him, "and consequently I shall trust you."

We held our rifles in readiness and waited. After several minutes there appeared from a hole among the rocks a head in a little, black sheep-skin cap, surveyed us from its piercing eyes and bobbed back again.

"Why are you carrying carbines?" came from the retiring head.

"Come out, or I shall blow up the shaft," I replied sharply.

"You are a peppery individual," answered the Georgian.

"Well, we have no choice. Perhaps you will be true to your promise."

One after another seven men emerged from the mouth of the gallery. Tall, thin, dressed in tight-fitting black coats with leather belts ornamented in silver, they made a striking spectacle, that was enhanced by the boldness of their expressions. The Cossacks quickly searched them, but the Georgians had kept their word and brought out no arms.

"You can go," I said to the first one who came out, "and do not trouble us in our work. Also you had better not enter any of these shafts again, as they can easily fall in and trap you there."

The young Georgian, with a strong, refined face set with fiery eyes, expanded the nostrils of his aquiline nose, showed with a smile a set of even, white teeth and answered :

"We took shelter here, as we were afraid of the *hung-hutzes*." As he finished, he lowered his eyes and betrayed in his lips the tremble of a hidden laugh.

"Yes, I thoroughly understand! Seven such *djighits* (a rider or warrior) must, of course, be afraid of the *hung-hutzes*! The Georgians are no warriors."

The young man raised his head and blushed. He seemed about to give a sharp and provoking reply, but, as he caught my eye, he broke out in a laugh. The other Georgians turned away their heads to avoid following the lead of their careless companion.

"Then we may go?"

"I have already said so once."

"Thank you," exclaimed the young Georgian, and quickly advanced to me. "My name is Eristoff, Prince Eristoff."

With those words he extended his hand. I pressed his small, strong palm and gave him my name. Each of his associates came up and repeated this urban ceremony in the midst of these wild surroundings, and then they all turned and filed quietly away.

We started at once to explore the realm of these elves, leaving the Cossacks on guard at the entrance. By the aid of our oil lamps we discovered in a lateral drift a miniature arsenal, two bags of food and a box of cartridges.

This encounter with the Georgians did not particularly astonish me. It was not then unusual to meet representatives of this warlike folk in the towns of the Russian Far East and even in China. "Why is this so?" one naturally asks. There are several reasons for this long journey.

The Georgians have always been a liberty-loving people, among whom the oppression of the Russian authorities in the Caucasus has often led to risings and revolution. Following such events the Russian tribunals have banished many of these children of the great mountain ranges, these knights of liberty, to eastern Siberia.

In the opposition parties in Russia, Georgians were always found supporting the most radical doctrines. It is sufficient to recall the names of Prince J. G. Tzeretelli, I. I. Ramishwili and N. S. Cheidze to show what prominent positions Georgians have taken in the revolutionary ranks.

The traditional Eastern law of revenge, summarized in the one word "vendetta," was another cause which augmented the number of Georgian exiles in Siberia. To illustrate the Georgian character in these matters, it is perhaps legitimate to rehearse a story which is said to be authentic. A Georgian accused a neighbour of having offended him. On the day of the trial the plaintiff duly came to the court, but the defendant did not appear. When the judge ordered the court police to summon the accused to come forthwith before the tribunal, the plaintiff, after the police had departed on their errand, shook his head quizzically and protested to the judge:

"The police will accomplish nothing, for he will not come."

"Why not?" queried the indignant judge. "They will compel him to come."

"They will have to bring him," the Georgian mumbled.

"How so?"

"Because I killed him this morning."

And in addition there was still one more cause which helped to people Siberia with unwilling colonists from Georgia—the primordial warlike custom of attacking neighbouring tribes and villages to rob them of horses and cattle and to carry off their women. This practice, looked upon by the *djighits* in the light of knightly valour, has persisted in the Caucasus from time immemorial.

The Georgians, with their really passionate love of

freedom, cannot be kept long in prison or under compulsory labour. Somehow they always manage to escape and hide themselves away in the nooks and corners of towns, from which they stage their bold robbing expeditions. During the Russo-Japanese War there sprang up and flourished a special Georgian band, which became a terror not only to the Japanese but also to the Chinese population, even harassing small Russian detachments, particularly those convoying army supply trains. In every town in the Far East there were restaurants, inns and buffets kept by Georgians in good standing, which were made the hiding-places of their countrymen, wanted by the law and the police, and from which these banditti carried out their operations. As almost all the Georgians came from families belonging to an old knightly nobility, a *djighit* never lowered himself to be a common thief nor attacked a lone and disarmed man. Every Georgian expedition must be crowned with a battle and with blood. This characteristic naturally left the Russian police with little zest for fighting these courageous "devils of the mountains," and for this reason the Georgian fugitives from the prisons usually enjoyed long spells of liberty, that ended only when some specially unfavourable turn of fortune carried them back behind the bars or when the bullet of a pursuing guard broke the thread of their adventurous life.

I had no doubt that I had dislodged from the cavern some such dangerous individuals, full of knightly phantasy and old traditions so strangely blended with common banditry. My suspicions proved to be entirely well founded, for on my return to Harbin I learned that a gang of seven Georgians had attacked a field post, killed several men and taken a considerable sum of money. The Harbin police, who were traditionally slack during these years, stated that the gang was led by a Prince Eristoff, who had escaped from the prison at Vladivostok and for whom they had long been searching.

CHAPTER X

COAL AND A CURSED LAKE

THROUGHOUT the next few days I inspected all the abandoned shafts and came to the conclusion that the mining had been carried on without any regular system and had consequently rendered impossible a proper utilization of the various seams, which had been ruined for practical development by wrongly placed galleries that were now crumbling in many spots. Besides this, the coal was young and very friable, pulverizing readily, a fact which greatly militated against its value for use in locomotives and also made it very difficult to transport economically. Consequently I eliminated these deposits from consideration and journeyed farther up the Sungari.

As we reached the mouth of the River Nonni, we turned up the stream and began fighting its current, working our way north-west. Carefully cultivated fields of kaoliang, millet and soya beans lined the banks of the Golden Nonni; and numerous villages of the greyish-brown *fang-tzu*, looking like irregular heaps of dried clay, were visible everywhere.

The captain of the steamer, who had in earlier years navigated the Nonni, informed me that we were approaching the mouth of the Tolo, an affluent coming in from the west. This smaller stream forms the north-eastern boundary of the sparsely covered eastern extremity of the Gobi, the presence of whose wastes we had already had borne in upon us by such clouds of dust and sand that the skies and the sun were at times obscured by them, giving to everything a uniform, monotonous veil of yellow colouring. In places these drifting sands worked their way across the

fields that bordered the river and stretched their fingers into the stream in the form of spits and shoals.

Near a village, where we had decided to stop, the captain moored his steamer against a high bank cut out by the current. As soon as we were tied up, I sent Rusoff out with some of the Chinese to hire a number of carts to take us along the bank of the Tolo, where I had been informed there existed considerable deposits of coal. We could not, however, find any transport in this village, so that Rusoff had to go off to the nearest town, Hsin Chao, from where he brought in with him seven great lumbering, screeching Manchurian farm-carts, which gave the impression of having been bereft of oil since the day they were built.

With this transport we started for the Tolo along a road across the fields that was unimaginably rutted and in places deep with the sands borne in on the western winds from the Gobi. It was already the end of September, and at dawn cold blasts often heralded the coming winter. There behind the almost black ranges of the Great Khingans the cold north-west winds of autumn were already playing madly at their game of sowing desert sands, while here on the eastern slope of the range the winter spoke as yet only in a whisper, warning of what was to come and cautioning man and beast to prepare.

Another of the inevitable warnings of the approaching cold came to us from those wingéd messengers, honking out the news that the northern swamps and rivulets were putting on their winter pelts and that it was time for all feathered creatures to be away to the south. As I watched again with never-tiring enthusiasm this migration of the birds, I looked with longing at the leather case in which my shotgun lay, impatiently waiting for the days of the autumn chase.

We pitched our camp in a little village near the point where the Tolo joins the Nonni. The rather high eastern spurs of the Great Khingans reached down nearly to the

river bank, and out from the valleys and gullies between these mountain shoulders many little streams ran down into the Tolo, forming a whole network of waterways across a marshy plain that was overgrown with high grass, dotted everywhere with clumps of bushes coming up out of the bog.

Several times I crossed these bogs on my way to the mountains, where I found outcrops of coal in the steep slopes that was of so good a quality that I ordered prospecting work to be undertaken to determine the thickness and direction of the seams and the quantity available.

While Rusoff and Gorloff superintended these operations, I took advantage of the opportunity to visit the neighbouring country. Inasmuch as the pain in my leg prevented me from riding, I had to go about in a cart and usually took the captain of the steamer and a Cossack along with me as an escort. We visited the plain lying between the rivers Tolo and Chor, both affluents of the Nonni, and found that two low, almost bare, foothills of the Great Khingans reach down into it. Everywhere we came across wide expanses of kaoliang fields, dotted with rather prosperous-looking Chinese villages, set in circles of tall, old trees. We had often to cross brooks and small rivers, whose banks were overgrown with thick scrub oak bushes and reeds, and in these we kicked out an extraordinary number of pheasants from right under our feet, being able only to stand and watch them run swiftly away, twisting in and out through the grass and bushes and almost flattened to the earth as they ran.

Finding they would not rise, we metamorphosed our Cossack into a hunting dog, sent him into the brush about two hundred yards ahead of us and had him come shouting down toward us. When the birds broke and discovered us, they flared straight up into the air and gave us easy targets. Sometimes for days we fed our men on this delicious game, thus giving them, with their fondness for meat and their inability to indulge this expensive taste,

a tremendous treat. However, after some time we ourselves tired of this dainty and could no longer swallow what had become for us an insipid meat; and we consequently soon ceased hunting, as this is the least interesting of shooting, when the birds are so numerous.

Not far from the mouth of the Chor we found a lake of the same name, almost entirely overgrown with reeds and rushes and covered, in the slightly deeper parts, with a carpet of water-lilies and the leaves of small aquatic plants. One evening, when the ducks and geese were fighting, we made an observation here at this lake which astonished us and set us wondering what the explanation might be. When flocks of these birds, tired by the day's journey, circled over the lake with the evident intention of stopping there for the night, instead of settling, they began to utter their notes of warning and danger, as they swung down close over the water and swept up and away to make off toward the river. We were quite at a loss to understand the reason of the birds for consistently refusing to settle and were much interested and relieved, when we unexpectedly ran across the explanation of it in the little village on its shore, where we happened to be stopping.

It came in the course of a legend which the old Manchu, in whose house we were lodging, related to us, as he was handling and examining our arms. As the captain translated it to me, the old man's story ran about as follows:

"It was long, long ago—so long that even my grandfather did not remember it—that a terrible famine raged in China. Thousands upon thousands of people died in towns and villages, and it was only here between the Chor and the Tolo that Death did not levy his inexorable toll. This was because of our lake. In the spring and autumn immense flocks of ducks, geese, swans and other migrating birds came here to feed. They arrived in the spring from the south and the south-west, in the autumn down the valley of the Nonni and south-eastward against the current

of the Sungari; and they always stopped on our lake for a long period of rest and feeding, for then fish and nutritious water-plants were plentiful.

"In those days Buddha was reverently worshipped in our countryside. As you know, the Buddhist faith does not allow the use of the flesh of birds and fish. During the famine years a Chinese merchant from the south arrived here and, seeing the quantity of birds and fish and scoffing at the precepts of our faith, persuaded the people to make use of these ample supplies of food to protect them from the scourge of hunger. Following his advice, the people made a great net, larger than any ever seen on the Sungari, and also set many cunning traps for the birds. With the fish and game they thus took, our forefathers sustained themselves through the years of hunger and the lake region really did not suffer. But, when the famine was a thing of the past, a Lama monk, robed in yellow, came here from behind the ranges of the Great Khingans. He walked around the lake, entered each house, then returned to the shore, cut thin poles and stuck them in the earth at seven paces apart until he had entirely encircled the water, putting on each one of the rods a bit of red cloth with a holy phrase written upon it. When the lake had thus been surrounded with this portentous circle, the Lama summoned all the people together and spoke to them as follows :

" 'The great teacher, Buddha Sakya-muni, did not desire your death and looked in silence on your crime. However, as evidence of his displeasure at your departure from his precepts, he has ordained that the fish shall no longer multiply in your lake, nor shall any flock of migrating birds ever come down again to its surface.'

"Since that day there have never been any fish in the Lake of Chor. They sometimes have come in from the river but have immediately turned back or perished in the cursed water. It is the same with the birds. Ducks, geese and swans often circle for hours on end above Chor,

but none of them, even the most tired or the wounded birds, ever venture to touch the water with their breasts, on account of the poisonous vapours which the Lama caused to rise from it."

Such was the tale of the old Manchu, and he lived in calm and undisturbing ignorance of the fact that it was not the curse of the yellow Lama that kept the lake free of fowl but that the birds, with the help of their keen, intuitive sense of danger, detected in the strong fumes of the lake the warning that it was no proper place for them to rest or feed. Of course, with the story-loving Oriental, it builds a better tale to have these riders of the air pass down from generation to generation the command of Great Buddha to forsake for ever this forbidden pool; but it seems crudely necessary to give our credence to the more scientific, though much less attractive, theory that the poisonous vapours mentioned by the Manchu are the result of the slow death of the lake through the putrefying activity of several species of bacteria, which, as they multiply, kill or frighten away all animal life.

Whatever the explanation, we shared in the realization of the fact and could not find any game around the shores of the lake, though we did pick up some unusual shooting experience along the marshy banks of the River Tolo about six miles from our prospecting work. It was one Saturday night that we first went there. We left our cart with the Chinese driver on the edge of the marsh, where the thick oak bushes began, and, taking with us a large kettle, cups, tea, salt, sugar and hard bread, penetrated into the high grass and reeds. Though it was still an hour to the dawn, we already heard the thrilling trumpeting of the geese, as we took our stands along the marsh, making our blinds among the bushes and waiting for the sun, which seemed so loath to appear.

Though the birds flew high that morning and gave us poor sport, I had the satisfaction of making an unusual double on a lone pair of big geese that came sweeping

right over the waving tops of the grass and flared a wonderful target, which both the captain and I missed with all four cartridges. In disgust I reloaded and chased the birds across the stream with two shots that brought them down.

On the evening flight we had even worse treatment at the hands of Diana, for the Khingans joined the goddess of the hunt and poured down upon us a sudden freshet that drove us from our blinds and sent us wandering the whole night through over the flooded plain in a deluge of rain. In our search for the Chinese carter with our food, we entirely lost ourselves and began moving in the fatal circles that proved our want of compasses.

The captain waxed more profane with each hour of the night, while the Cossack at one time sighed so piteously that my heart grew sad for him.

"What ails you?" I asked with some concern, for I thought he must be in pain.

"I put my sugar in my pocket. It has melted and now I am sticky all over."

"Damn it!" shouted the captain, "this is the limit! Comfits made of Cossacks!"

In spite of all our fatigue we roared with laughter.

Somehow we dragged the night through and at dawn, more dead than alive, we finally discovered our cart and the genial old driver with a kettle of tea swinging over a sputtering fire, ready to welcome and revive us.

An hour later, after we had dried our clothes somewhat, we were once more in our cart on our way back to the village where we had our working headquarters. On arriving, I found I could not get down without assistance and that my right leg and swollen joint could not be moved without giving me excruciating pain. For about a week I had to remain on my back in the dirty Chinese *fang-tzu*, doctoring myself for the indiscretions committed. Meantime the prospecting work turned out favourably, and I estimated that the ground under exploration had four

seams of coal, each of about six feet in thickness, and that the area of the deposit was sufficiently large to justify exploitation. As the aim of my exploration trip was thus accomplished, it only remained for the technical division of the Railway Administration or of the General Staff to continue the work, and my part as adviser was at an end.

CHAPTER XI

THE LIGHTNING IN THE CLOUDS

SOON I was on my way down the Sungari to Harbin, with a detailed report of our findings and with a bad leg and foot, which grew more and more painful every day. When we reached town, I at once presented my report on the coal and returned home to go to bed, having in place of *hunghutzes*, Georgians, geese and guns nothing more exciting than the daily visit of my doctor, who only shook his head and repeated critically and with aggravating persistence :

"You are a madman, a real madman ! With such a joint you ought to lie in bed for at least three months and then walk for six months with the aid of a cane, instead of which you make these foolhardy expeditions, go hunting, get wet and take cold."

"But, doctor," I protested, as I once lost patience under his criticisms, "what a double I made on those two geese ! And besides, remember I saw a candied Cossack."

He only waved his hand and grumbled, as he went out :

"What you need is a brain specialist !"

I did not, however, employ such a doctor, as my grumbling physician brought me round again ; and, if I could not think of hunting, I could, with the help of my stick, make the journey to my laboratory. During my first days about I had a joint meeting with representatives of the Railway Administration and the General Staff, in which I asked for sick leave and at the same time proposed that I be sent to St. Petersburg, where, while I was undergoing treatment, I might make the necessary purchases for the laboratory.

The Railway Administration acquiesced at once, and the General Staff some days later sent me a notification that I had been decorated with the Order of St. Anna with crossed swords.

As I was paying a visit in the household of one of my friends, who was unusually well informed as to matters in the St. Petersburg Government circles and in the war area, I heard about the intrigues against the Commander-in-Chief, about the quarrels and struggles among the members of the General Staff and about the Homeric excesses in the supplying of the army. One of my close acquaintances, a well-known and courageous regimental commander, told me, and gave me proofs of the statement, that some corps leaders had wittingly sent thousands of men to certain death, only to enable them to forward to General Kuropatkin, and through him to St. Petersburg, detailed and highly coloured reports of sanguinary battles, in the hope of receiving rewards for participation in these severe engagements. The lives of simple peasants, labourers, University youths, high-school students, in fact those of the whole grey mass of soldiers were wantonly sacrificed just to bring to some individual distinction, reward or fame !

In contrast with this, little effective work was being accomplished for the success of the war and nothing was being done to augment the transport capacity of the only railroad that could supply additional men and war materials. Whole trains of commissary supplies and clothing disappeared, while shoddy cloth and cheap boots, wet flour, spoiled bread and meat, fermented preserves and rancid lard came through in immense quantities. The nation's money was squandered, disappearing in the pockets of dishonest officials and officers. The soldiers were robbed at every step in the official path, no one seeming to realize or take into account that it was they who, with their blood, were defending the interests of Russia in the Far East. In a word, we were witnesses to a despicable and shameful crime, the selling of the blood and the lives of

men for the tinsel of fame or for the price of riotous living.

Incensed by these tales, I could not keep silent, and so, one day when a Russian "patriot" was holding forth in the Railway Club, I exploded and delivered a long and passionate arraignment, accusing the Government of aiming to annex territory from other countries and of real treason to the interests of the people who were being led to death for the selfish glory of the dynasty. I pointed out how, to their sorrow, into the great national fabric of Russia had been forcibly woven the Poles, Letts, Esthonians, Finns, Tartars, Armenians, Georgians, Kirghizi and others, who had been deprived of country and were given little or no consideration in the imperial politics of St. Petersburg.

My speech bore unexpected fruit. A committee was formed at once and voted to despatch an immediate telegram to General Kuropatkin and to the Central Government, asking that the mistakes of administration, allowed and passed until now, be investigated and corrected. In this telegram we pointed out that, under present conditions and methods, the war could not possibly result victoriously and cited in support of our statement the following reasons: first, the technical conditions of transport and supply were exceedingly weak and had not been carefully developed beforehand; secondly, the Russian policy in Manchuria had so aroused the hatred of the Chinese and Manchus that this numerous population of the area in which a strong enemy was being fought was almost uniformly hostile; thirdly, the High Command had wantonly wasted the lives of the soldiers in movements without strategic value or gain; and, fourthly, abuses in all the branches of the war administration had weakened the fighting powers of the army.

There joined me in the signature of this telegram a large number of high civil officials and other prominent persons, among whom were those who later shared with me political imprisonment. I felt that I had an un-

questioned right to sign this telegram, this strong protest against the crime of the Government, in view of the fact that my countrymen were numerous in the Siberian regiments and were among those who perished on this alien soil in a cause which was not only alien to them but for which they felt real and strong opposition. Also I felt entitled to protest in this manner, inasmuch as I was myself worn out at the time of signing this telegram by my hard and dangerous service for this dominating power and its alien aims, and I was not at all sure that I should not remain a cripple for the rest of my life from the increasingly painful condition of my foot. Summing it all up, I felt that I had done conscientious work in my own position and had the right to be protected by the same from others in the struggle.

It was reported that the telegram created a marked impression in St. Petersburg; but, instead of arranging for and empowering a thorough investigation, the Government talked only of the necessity for arresting us and for interning us in the near-by small fortress of Sansing. However, General D. L. Horvat, the Director-General of the Chinese Eastern Railway, for whom our arrest would mean the loss of many of his most necessary assistants, protested against any such action and saved us. Still we remained under the surveillance of the political police, or secret service, which was used by the Government for the purpose of keeping in touch with, and suppressing the activities of, opponents of its policy among highly placed officials and others.

Some days after this event, in the course of an official visit to certain military establishments in western Manchuria and Siberia, I found myself on board the Siberian express, headed westward and meeting with ever-increasing frequency more and more of the military trains, laden with fresh forces for General N. P. Linievitch, who had been appointed to succeed Kuropatkin, after the latter's dismissal as a result of the overwhelming catastrophe in the

battle of Moukden, where the Russians lost one hundred and forty thousand men.

In my imagination this iron caravan moved as a great, sad critique upon the futility of what had already gone before in this age-long repercussion of the westward movement of the Tartar hordes. There were the battle of Sha Ho, the unsuccessful operations of Grippenbergh, the requests of Kuropatkin for the formation of the third army and the loss of this at Moukden, the capitulation of the powerful fortress of Port Arthur and finally the mad voyage of Admirals Rozhestvensky and Niebogoff with a fleet of old and weak men-o'-war from the Baltic to the fatal Straits of Tsushima—all these stirred up terror and awe in the more thoughtful elements of Russian society.

But there were other events in course of enactment, even more dangerous and more thrilling, which were shaking the foundations of the immense conglomerate Empire. These deflected public attention from the debacle in the Orient. It was Revolution, the Empire-wide tragedy !

In this immense drama Fate decreed that I was to play a part. Numerous external and internal causes forced me to take this rôle. Of the latter I shall speak later on ; of the former I need only say that they were uniformly compelling. My name was well known among the Russian subjects in the East through the descriptions of my travels, through my work and lectures and, especially, as a result of the telegram of protest against the conduct of the war, which drew down upon us signatories the enmity of the authorities but gained us the sympathy and respect of the civil population and of the subaltern officers and soldiers of the army. My work in co-operation with the Staff of the Commander-in-Chief, a task which had, fortunately for me, been brought to a successful conclusion, gave me intimate relations with many of the High Command, who thus came to value my work and to count upon my services, even though, knowing my views on the war and on the

work of some of the generals, they also in a way feared me. Subsequent events, as will be later seen, justified them in this feeling.

But these developments only came about some months later. In the meantime I journeyed on to a new whirlpool of events, terrible, implacable and bloody, as has been so much of the history of Russia, this country into which Europe and Asia have thrown, as upon a national rubbish heap, the worst element of other races and nations, hiding it all from the spectator with a thin covering of civilization adorned here and there with bright patches of romanticism.

As I look back now upon the events and thoughts of this intense period of my life, I see much that I might have avoided or might have done differently, in the light of my present experience. And for this reason I have found it difficult at times to justify myself in giving all the details of some of our activities just as they were or of reviewing without editing the thoughts which activated us. There is, consequently, a natural tendency to wish to write into the record the viewpoint of to-day; yet, in spite of this fact, I have sought to keep the narrative as close as possible to the physical events and the mental processes of those years themselves, in order that as true a picture as possible might be carried down.



PART II

THE PRESIDENCY AND THE PRISON

CHAPTER XII

THE CRIMSON TIDE

THROUGHOUT my whole journey I observed everywhere a marked change in the attitude of the people.

In earlier chapters I have already noted the way sentiment had changed among the Russian population of the Far East and even among the soldiers and officers of the army; but these changes had thus far amounted to nothing more than explosive outbursts of hope or of deep despondency and disaffection.

Talks with my fellow-travellers made it clear to me that our Harbin telegram, protesting against the futile and aimless bloodshed, was only a feeble reflection of the feelings of Russia as a whole, about which we really knew almost nothing in our isolation at the front, where we were deceived with false reports and surrounded by the police net that allowed no unfavourable news from the west to slip through its meshes. I recalled then the unusual flare of hope among the Russians in Manchuria when the unhappy General Kuropatkin, surrounded as he was on every side with intrigue, was finally recalled to St. Petersburg after the disastrous defeat of his three armies at Moukden, and succeeded by the elderly General Linievitch. This change awoke that hope which comes so readily, often without real foundation, to the breast of the Russian, only to disappear after the smallest mishap like a momentary flash of lightning.

My fellow-travellers from Russia said that in Russia itself the people laboured under no illusions. The war was regarded as lost; the Tsar and the Government were

hated. The hypocritical politics of the Tsar, through which his "beloved nation" was criminally deceived, made him especially detested. After the destruction of the Russian fleet by the Japanese, representatives of different elements and classes of the whole people formulated and presented to Nicholas a petition, in which the Government was accused of inefficiency and a parliament demanded. This document closed with the warning words :

" Oh, Tsar, do not delay ! In this terrible hour of national catastrophe your responsibility before God and Russia is unspeakably great ! "

In response to the petition the Tsar promised the promulgation of a decree providing for a parliament : but, when the passions and emotions of the people had cooled somewhat, he procrastinated and only afterwards, when new explosions revealed the indignation of his subjects and the whole country had become a vast network of revolutionary societies and parties, did he yield to the demand for a parliament, attaching the almost nullifying proviso that it should have only advisory powers without any rights of legislation.

At the same time the political police were everywhere active, making arrests, banishment and the death sentence daily phenomena. When I finally learned, while still in St. Petersburg, that a general strike as a protest and as an accompaniment to a universal request for a parliament was in contemplation for the whole of Russia, during which the employees of all the railways, steamship lines, factories and offices, as well as those of the post and telegraph services, were to go out, I understood that the Revolution, whose birth I had witnessed at the beginning of the year, was already developed and I, therefore, hastened my return to Harbin.

The impending strike, however, caught me *en route* and caused such difficulties in transportation that I just managed to get through to Harbin. Here we learned that

in some of the cities of Russia and Siberia the strike had been marked by street barricading and the fighting of workmen and University students with the police and the army. Then, throughout the whole vast Empire, suddenly a foreboding silence fell. The straining ears of the listening Government and of its spies and executioners recognized and knew it well; but the police, the gendarmes and the Tsar could do nothing against this hush, for it was a thing not to be caught and against which the machine guns and the rifles of the Tsar could not shoot.

Finally, Nicholas was obliged to yield, but only under the pressing advice of his Minister of Finance, Count Witte. On October 17th, 1905, he issued a manifesto, giving to the Government parliamentary form; but, in doing so, he drafted the statute creating the Duma in such a manner that the importance, influence and authority of this much-needed institution were very greatly and discouragingly diminished.

As a matter of fact, the Imperial manifesto satisfied nobody. On the one hand, the reactionaries were furious over the fact that the Government had yielded; while, on the other, the revolutionists were displeased and disenchanted, inasmuch as the manifesto neither granted amnesty and liberation to the political prisoners nor settled the grievous agrarian question of land ownership, which was of such great importance to the peasants forming 85 per cent. of Russia's population.

This general discontent with the Tsar's *ukase* manifested itself almost immediately in the two distinct camps. The reactionary elements, as well as the revolutionists, began to organize, and it was inevitable that a fight should break out between them. While I was in St. Petersburg, I saw even then the first indications of the formation of these organizations, presaging in unmistakable terms their future activities.

The reactionary forces began organizing what were called the "Black Hundreds" with the motto: "Monarchy,

Orthodox faith and Russian nationalism." These Black Hundreds were a strange mixture of class, social opinion and mental development, counting among their numbers some of the highest of the aristocrats, such as Princes Volkonsky, Ukhtomsky and Meschtchersky, Count Bobrinsky, Dr. Dubrovin, the lawyers, Zamyslovsky and Bulatsel, the priest, Vostorgoff, and Archbishop Makari, as well as many former criminal prisoners and a large representation from the jetsam of mankind in the big towns, that stratum of Russian humanity which has been so poetically described and idealized in the well-known writings of Maxim Gorky; while, right beside these types from the lowest layer of social life, were to be found such well-known scholars as Professors Martens and Janjoull. After the manifesto of October 17th these Black Hundreds were amalgamated into one great organization for the whole Empire, taking for their name "The Union of the Russian Nation" and having for their honorary president—the Tsar Nicholas II! Both this Ruler of All the Russias and the heir to the throne, the Tsarevitch Alexis, wore on their breasts the emblem of this Union, which was a state within the State, committing and remaining unpunished for most bloody crimes.

As this Union of the Russian Nation had for its object the suppression of the revolution and its child, the parliament, it accused the non-Russian elements in the population of the Empire—that is, the Poles, Georgians, Letts, Jews and many other subject peoples, as well as large sections of the *intelligentsia*—of liberal and revolutionary ideas and of spreading these throughout the country.

The revolutionary elements, composed of the most worth-while members of the *intelligentsia*, as well as of the workers and of all the professional unions, also organized themselves and elected two principal bodies to prosecute the Revolution: first, The League of the Unions, the more moderate of the two, and, as the second, The Council of the Deputies of the Workers, a body with the most radically

revolutionary views and tendencies and presided over by the lawyer Khrustaloff-Nosar.

Synchronously The Union of the Russian Nation freely lavished funds in the formation of detachments composed of the ex-prisoners, criminals, beggars and those shifting individuals who, without any regular means of livelihood, spend their days around low cafés and their nights in the parks or in night refuges, frequently those watched over by a uniformed guard. These detachments soon began their activities in the cities and towns, so that the *pogroms* of 1905 swept like a bloody wave over some hundred or more of Russia's unfortunate urban populations, returning a significant report of over four thousand people killed and some ten thousand wounded.

One of these massacres in the city of Tomsk was entirely characteristic. It took place on October 20th and was described to me by a man who had been one of my former pupils in the High Polytechnic Institute and who was later a member of the Duma, Mr. A. A. Skorokhodoff. A large gathering of the inhabitants of the town, principally officials, professors, teachers and students, had assembled in the theatre to give expression to their joy over the Tsar's manifesto, granting the modern constitution. While the townspeople in the theatre were listening to speeches on the importance of this epoch-making political act, a procession, composed of labourers of the lowest type, of stevedores from the docks along the Tom, of ex-prisoners and even of the inmates of the town prison, who had been specially released for this day, was formed and was marching through the streets. Among this crowd of wild, drunken and demoralized men moved agents of the political police, fanning their hatred and urging them on to acts of vengeance against the *intelligentsia*. A picture of the Tsar and some ecclesiastical banners were borne at the head of the procession. When this mob, armed with cudgels, knives and black-jacks, drew up before the house of Bishop Makari, the "holy old man" appeared on the balcony and blessed

the procession, making a strong appeal to their patriotism, which was the paraphrase for the fight for unrestrained power of the Tsar.

With this blessing of the man of the Church upon them, the mob marched straight to the theatre and fell to massacring the *intelligentsia* gathered there. The few who succeeded in escaping into the street were caught and despatched by cudgels or bullets or by being thrown into the river for the sport of the crowd. The ghastly total of those who perished on this day was twelve hundred souls, among whom was a distinguished Polish engineer, Klionowski, who at the time held the post of assistant to the Director-General of the Siberian Railway.

I had personally known Bishop Makari. A small, thin old man, with an ascetic face recalling the Byzantine pictures of the saints, he was, however, the son of a Siberian peasant, possessed of a small stock of learning and wholly steeped in the psychology of Tsarism and of the Orthodox faith. He was a sly, malignant and narrow-minded man, who persecuted all new or fresh currents of thought in the Church or in society. He made a name and a career for himself by spreading the faith among the natives of Altai, whom he first intoxicated with alcohol and then baptized while they were unconscious. After the Tomsk massacre he was rapidly advanced in the Church hierarchy, became Archbishop and after some years a member of the Synod, the council of the Orthodox Church, finally progressing to the post of Metropolitan of Moscow. While he held this highest position in the Church, he incurred the displeasure of the Tsarina during the World War through associating himself with other high ecclesiastical dignitaries in a plot to demand from the Tsar the divorcing of his consort, who had brought upon herself the disapproval and hatred of some of the influential members of the Russian aristocracy.

In this bloody manner, such as was manifested at Tomsk and was contrary to all the accepted standards of modern

society, the organizations belonging to The Union of the Russian Nation prosecuted their aims in the name of Tsar, Faith and Country. In answer, the revolutionary and liberal groups acted in a manner very little different; for the Russian psychology of destruction here held the upper hand as well.

These liberals and revolutionists realized that the forces of the *intelligentsia* and of the workers in the towns were not sufficiently strong to compel the Government and the Tsar to make a complete change in favour of an effective parliamentary control, and soon sensed the fact that they should have to thrust into the whirlpool of political struggle that great element of strength which could not be overpowered by an army faithful to the Tsar—the Russian peasant. The propaganda injected into this great mass of over a hundred million of unlettered, trampled and desperate human souls was like a burning torch flung into a mow of hay.

In a trice the whole country was aflame. The Revolution had become a peasant war and, fired to secure their rights, these half-serfs began to raid the estates of the big landowners, robbing the houses, carrying off the stores of grain and flour, driving away the stock and, in many cases, taking over the management and alleged ownership of the landlord's fields. In these acts the destroying, criminal instincts of the Russian mass had free and fatal vent.

Later I personally witnessed some of the results of this peasant uprising at "Manuilovo," the estate of Mr. S. M. Pavlovitch in the Government of St. Petersburg. Here the palatial, historic country residence, containing many mementoes of one of the greatest Russian story writers, Karamzin, who formerly lived there, was completely demolished. The furniture was hacked to pieces, irreplaceable pictures were cut in ribbons, great mirrors were smashed and the books made fuel for a bonfire in front of the great mansion. Thoroughbred horses were ham-

strung, hunting dogs were hung, while blooded cattle and prize sheep were slaughtered for meat. Similar acts were perpetrated in forty-nine of the governments of European Russia and were especially violent in the Baltic Provinces, where the Lettish peasants put to the sword their masters, the German barons, who were the descendants of the Teutonic Knights and had come under the domination of Russia with the conquest of these western regions.

This river of blood and destruction had its sources in the psychology of the Russians, regardless of whether they belonged to the liberal and revolutionary parties hostile to the Tsar or to the reactionary Union of the Russian Nation, forwarding his wishes and ideas. It was all quite characteristic of the Russian nature, as it has often evinced itself. I observed the same phenomenon some years later during the war with Germany and Austria, when the Russian armies perpetrated the most awful massacres and the wildest scenes of pillage in the districts of Poland, East Prussia and Galicia, in which officers from the most aristocratic and cultured families took intimate part. Later I witnessed sickening instances of this Asiatic psychology of warring nomads in the fratricidal struggle under the Soviet regime, during which the Reds and the Whites rivalled each other in blood spilling, in the destruction of the national fortune accumulated through many generations, in cruelty and in criminal ingenuity.

I do not know which of them was the worse, which the better; but I do know that they will both appear before the throne of the Almighty Judge in robes covered with the blood of their brothers and of those innocent nations and tribes which have had the misfortune, by a stern decree of Fate, to have been conquered and dominated by the Russian Empire and afterward to have been ruled by the Soviet Republic.

The blow dealt by the peasant war against the fighting power of the Tsar's Government was very sore, as it led

to many protests and revolts by peasants' sons serving with the army and the fleet.

These were the waves of the great bloody tide that followed me in my eastward journey through Siberia back to Harbin.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BIRTH OF THE FAR EASTERN GOVERNMENT

IN Harbin I found life at the seething point. Many unions were organized, of which the largest and the most powerful, because of the culture and standing of its members, was the Railroad Union, composed of technical experts, administrative officials and workers of various classes. While these steps were being taken, I learned that agents of the political police had arrived from Europe and had organized The Union of the Russian Nation, as the leading members of which they appointed Captain Yerofeieff, one of the prominent local merchants and some priests. Some of the railway technical and administrative staff joined them.

For a month there were no revolutionary activities attempted, the attention of the unions being centred upon the instruction of their members in political and social questions and in constitutional and civil law.

Meanwhile great changes were taking place in the war area. The war was over and the army remained under the command of General Linievitch, encamped and awaiting evacuation at Ssupingkai, a station on the railway line about half-way between Moukden and Changchun. But the great trans-continental line across Siberia was in a very bad condition owing to the abnormal strains which had been put on it by the ceaseless transportation of soldiers and war materials. The natural shortage of cars, resulting from such uninterrupted use without sufficient time for repairs, was now aggravated by continued railway

strikes west of the Urals, which held up the traffic so effectively that army evacuation trains would have been compelled to remain in the sidings at Siberian stations, where, with the inevitable shortage of food in sufficient quantities for such numbers of men, there would naturally have developed revolts, robberies and struggles. Owing to all these causes, General Linievitch was forced to retain the army in Ssupingkai and to make what slight progress he could by sending the men back in small groups by the regular trains.

The army had by this time, of course, learned about the peace which had been made at Portsmouth through the intervention of America's great President, Theodore Roosevelt, and was awaiting with impatience a speedy return to Russia. This delay in the evacuation angered and antagonized the soldiers to a degree which manifested itself in some regiments in the form of revolts that brought much trouble and concern to the High Command.

Though during these first weeks life in Harbin was comparatively quiet, we were not destined to remain passive witnesses to the great tragedy that was being enacted on the vast stage of Russia from the Austro-German frontier to the shores of the Pacific. On November 23rd, 1905, the Railroad Union in Harbin received a telegram from the Central League of Unions at Moscow, announcing that at one o'clock on the night of the 24th a general strike of all railway, postal and telegraph employees would begin, to support the demand for the abolition of the death penalty so lavishly dealt out by the specially instituted field tribunals in Poland and Finland and the demand for the suspension of martial law in Poland and in certain other parts of the Empire where, through this military control, the lives of the people were in the hands of the field tribunals.

On the day the telegram was received a large general meeting was held in the rooms of the Railway Club, at which the opening speech was delivered by one of the senior civil engineers of the Chinese Eastern Railway,

Ignace Nowakowski, a Pole, who explained the significance of the protest of the Railroad Union and spoke of the crimes of the Government which forced the Russian nation and the peoples united with it, through being members of its body politic, to futile and bloody civil war. Spurred on by this spirited and powerful speech, the meeting decided to select and empower a general, guiding committee to take over the control and assume the administration of the Russian Far East. In the election of its members, which was participated in by the Europeans in Manchuria and by the representatives of Vladivostok and the other east Siberian towns which had been telegraphically informed regarding the developments, Nowakowski and I were chosen and with us the following Poles : ¹ W. Sass-Tisowski, M. Juszczynski, E. Ceglarski and A. Kozłowski. Among the Russians elected were the Assistant Director-General of the Chinese Eastern Railway, W. Lepeshinsky and the General Traffic Manager, K. von Dreyer. The total number on the Committee was fifty-six.

An hour after the general meeting adjourned, the Committee assembled for its initial meeting to select its executive board. It was then that I had conferred upon me an honour which carried in its train more of suffering and sacrifice than I should ever have cared to accept, had the delegates who expressed their confidence in my ability counted among them but one prophet who might have sketched for me the developments the coming two years had in store for the President of the Committee of Government of the Russian Far East.

My first official act was to despatch telegrams to the Commander-in-Chief, General Linievitch, to the chief in command of the administration in the rear of the armies,

¹ For a clear exposition of the reasons for Polish participation in the Revolution of 1905, see the Russian edition of *L'Histoire Politique de l'Europe Contemporain*, vol. ii, pp. 522-523, by Charles Seignobos, Professeur de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Paris.

General N. J. Ivanoff, and to the Director-General of the Chinese Eastern Railway, General D. L. Horvat, announcing to them that the Committee had assumed administrative control of the whole life of the country, that it ordered the cessation of the passenger train service on the railway but that it directed an increase in the military trains in order that the soldiers might be rapidly transported to European Russia to defend the rights of the people and to oppose the criminal acts of the Government. Constructive activity began at once, and, in contrast to what was expected, everyone worked during this strange "strike" three or four times as hard as usual.

It was not long after the despatch of the telegram before I had a visit from an aide-de-camp specially sent by General Linievitch, who told me it was his superior's conviction that only the Central Committee could prevent a revolt in the army and that General Linievitch had full trust in it and counted upon it to save a difficult situation. On the strength of this message we issued a proclamation to the army, explaining the present status of affairs in Russia and the duties of the soldier-citizens. Following this, quiet was gradually restored throughout the army and our influence grew daily, largely due to our expediting of the evacuation service, to our improvement of the food conditions for the detachments remaining in quarters and to our distinct bettering of both the medical service and the general treatment of the soldiers.

These successes of our Committee won the approval of the other committees working in the remaining large centres of the Far East and confirmed their acknowledgment of its leadership throughout the whole region. This brought under our control an immense area of eastern Siberia, stretching from the northern boundary of Manchuria to the Arctic Ocean and reaching eastward through the regions of the Amur and the lower Primorsk to the Korean frontier, as well as that part of Manchuria which lay north of the final battle line of the armies. The chief representatives

of the former Russian authority in these regions also acknowledged our control, as was evidenced by the fact that General Linievitch asked our advice in all important matters and had my signature stand jointly with his on all the orders he issued for the army. General Horvat also acted as adviser to our Committee and accepted its authority, just as all the town and village administrations recognized our position and readily came under our supervising direction. Only General Ivanoff, though he did not openly protest, seemed to base his actions upon some esoteric knowledge of future events. We learned later that, while recognizing us and apparently working with us, this treacherous General had affiliations with the political police and with The Union of the Russian Nation, which had in contemplation the sowing of dissension in our Committee.

On the fifth day of our existence we received the first blow against our authority, when half of the Committee, made up of the representatives of the workers, left our body with the announcement that they did not wish to co-operate with the *intelligentsia* and that they would form a committee of their own. Failing in my attempts to arrive at an understanding with the leaders of this new organization, I could do nothing more than delimit strictly their sphere of activities, leaving to them the management of the life of the workshops and the stores of the railway, with the distinct understanding that they were in nowise to interfere with the operations of the Chief Committee. A locksmith from European Russia, one F. Ivanoff, was chosen chairman of this Workers' Committee. Colonel Zaremba, a Pole and the Chief of Police in Harbin, and his associate, Captain von Ziegler, a German, confidentially informed me that Ivanoff was a secret agent of the political police, had close relations with The Union of the Russian Nation and was put in his present place to start a civil war in the Far East, with the idea that he should induce the army to join in the struggle of the working masses

against the *intelligentsia* and thus give the Government an excuse for sending a punitive expedition to the Far East to liquidate the revolution in the territory of the Manchurian army.

The plan was well laid with that subtle, Byzantine treachery which always characterized the Tsar's Government and which, in unchanged form, is equally characteristic of that of the Soviets. I saw quite distinctly the extent and seriousness of the danger before me; but I was young then and without experience, though I did possess one very useful quality for the president of a temporary government, into which the course of rapidly moving events metamorphosed our Committee. I was daring—and I profited simply and directly from my boldness.

Taking with me one of my associates in the Committee, a young official from the railway, named Vlasienko, I started off in my drosky, drawn by my beautiful white Arab, Nizam, as wise and reserved as Ben-Akiba, the Arabian philosopher, himself. Why did I choose Vlasienko? The reason was quite simple and clear: I had the intention of paying three calls where I should need, besides the ordinary visiting cards and smooth persuasive words, some positively convincing arguments. Vlasienko possessed such arguments. I had seen them once, when, during a stormy meeting of the Committee, at which a faction of the workers sought to make a disturbance, Vlasienko, when he could no longer listen with patience to the tedious and stupid protests the labour members were making, hammered the corner of the table with his fist with such emphasis that he broke it. It at once occurred to me that this man would be a very useful companion to convince any one whom I was seeking to influence with the justice—or at least with the excellent backing—of my arguments. Vlasienko had formerly served as a sergeant in the Hussars at the Tsar's Court and was known for his phenomenal strength.

With this convincing companion I started out to pay my calls. First we went to Captain Yerofeieff. When he saw me, he was distinctly troubled, which gave him quite away. I informed him at once that I knew about his underground work as President of The Union of the Russian Nation and that I was acquainted also with his associates and his purposes in the dealings he was carrying on.

"I have come to make your acquaintance and to inform you of the consequences of your activities, as I do not wish to make these too disagreeable for you."

"What can threaten me?" he exclaimed rather haughtily.

"A revolutionary judgment, sir; and, begging your pardon, a noose," I answered quietly. We parted with ceremonial politeness, and I left with him a final word:

"We do not jest, Captain. My visit to you is but the first act. I play the part of the angel Azrael. Good-bye."

Our visit to the second leader of the Black Hundred, the merchant Chistiakoff, was similar to the first. He received me and my advice very calmly and grunted, as we were leaving:

"We shall see."

"We shall certainly see," Vlasienko at once replied; "but this interview will be the last one between us."

The third visit proved more thrilling. We found the chairman of the Workers' Committee in his lodgings drinking with three companions. Bottles of vodka and sausage scraps littered the oilcloth-covered table. At our entrance they rose, breathing heavily, a condition that was probably due more to the alcohol than to their emotions.

"Mr. Ivanoff, you are an agent of the political police and you are seeking to start a civil war in the East, in which you hope to involve the army, to destroy the effects of all our work. I know all the facts and can give proof of them to the workers' tribunal. I give you three days in which to leave Manchuria for ever, failing which you will be arrested and . . ."

I was not quite sure what to say, when Vlasienko, in his clear tenor voice, finished the sentence for me with the word :

“ . . . hung ! ”

Ivanoff's eyes flashed, as he made a quick movement in the direction of the bed. But Vlasienko was quicker and snatched a big Nagan revolver from under the pillow. Then he calmly opened it, ejected the cartridges into the palm of his hand, slipped them into his pocket and quietly replaced the weapon with the apology :

“ I beg your pardon. ”

Our host and his visitors exchanged significant glances. My hand stole quickly to the pocket of my coat where I was carrying my Browning, but Vlasienko assumed the rôle of quieting our adversaries. He bent down and raised a heavy wooden bench, doing it with such grace and giving such an impression of ease that the savage-looking quartette dropped their eyes and subsided.

“ Well, then, I give you three days in which to make up your minds, ” I repeated, and, together with Vlasienko, left the den of this agent of the Tsar's Government, where under the stimulus of vodka, criminal plans, full of blood and treachery, were elaborated. On the following day I learned that the Workers' Committee—or, as it was called “ The Little Committee ”—were electing a new chairman, inasmuch as Ivanoff had disappeared. It was evident that, for the moment, my words and the arguments of Vlasienko had frightened him.

However, the newly chosen chairman did not succeed in calming or did not try to calm the mass of labourers, for many times during the succeeding days I was shown proclamations issued by the Little Committee, in which the soldiers and sailors were urged and incited “ to murder all the officers, to divide all their equipment and to attack the towns where the hated *intelligentsia* and bourgeoisie lived. ”

Telegrams brought word that such proclamations as

these made a very distinct impression upon the workers in many of the Siberian centres, especially Vladivostok, Habarovsk, Nikolaievsk on the Amur and Blagoveschensk, where the workers began developing riotous tendencies and breaking away from the control of our Central Committee. In Nikolaievsk wild gangs of the scum of mankind, composed very largely of fugitives from the prisons, who worked in the fishing industry at the mouth of the Amur, robbed the stores of their employers and burned their houses; in Blagoveschensk a crowd of drunken workers from the gold-mines attacked the bank in an effort to reach the concrete vaults where the gold ingots were kept; and General Linievitch wrote to me that the proclamations of the Harbin group were not without echoes in the army and that these echoes were invariably followed by harsh sentences in the military courts.

Conditions were such that our Committee suddenly found itself facing two distinct enemies, the first of which was coming from the west in the form of the penal detachments of the most reactionary Generals, Meller and Rennenkampf, whose aim was to throttle the revolutionary movement in Siberia. From the Urals to Transbaikalia the courts martial sent hundreds of men to death on the gallows or by shooting. General Rennenkampf had already worked eastward through Transbaikalia and was nearing the Manchurian frontier.

Our second enemy was none other than the Little Committee, whose intention was to instigate a civil war and to destroy the morale of the army, so that it could not be effectively used in support of the revolution. This was the much more dangerous of the two, as we knew that anarchy would follow in the wake of its victory, an anarchy of the most terrible kind, inasmuch as it would be directed by the most wild, the most immoral and the most cruel of individuals, who were numerous in the Russian Far East.

The activities of this Little Committee were but the

earnest of the deeds of Lenin and Trotzky, when these two, thirteen years later, put the power for the execution of their plans into the hands of proven criminals. However, we had yet heard and known nothing of Bolshevism, but we understood the whole danger of anarchy, to which the Little Committee of the unenlightened workers was being heedlessly driven by the promptings of the political police and of The Union of the Russian Nation.

In addition to these two foes we had ever before us the possibility of a third being developed, if our powers of accomplishment relaxed or if circumstances should go badly against us. This was the army. If the evacuation, which we were now superintending, were for any reason to be held up, the army would throw itself upon us, and then, in a flood of blood, the Central Committee, the workers and the town population would be drowned, while even the army itself would be largely destroyed by the want of food, after anarchy had cut off its regular supplies and its possibilities of transport to the more settled parts of western Siberia.

Events thus compelled us to become the defenders of law and order throughout the whole East, this order which the Tsar's authorities and the High Command of the army could not now maintain. We had consequently to fight on three fronts to fulfil our task, which exacted from us unbounded energy, fearless decision and well-elaborated plans.

We began our active struggle in fighting General Rennenkampf, whose trail through Siberia to the eastern borders of Transbaikalia was piteously marked by the bodies of the revolutionaries, upon whom he had visited his cruelties. In telegrams broadcasted throughout the East he threatened the Central Committee with dire punishment, describing it as a "revolutionary government" that could expect no leniency. At this, indignation and panic spread through the Far East. Not only the Little Committee but some of my associates in the central body became panicky and recommended the blowing up of railway bridges to check

Rennenkampf's advance after he should cross the Manchurian frontier. As these demands grew in insistency, I asked General Linievitch to endeavour to avert the catastrophe by stopping Rennenkampf. Linievitch properly sensed the impending disaster and issued orders that the approaching penal detachment was to turn back from Transbaikalia. This came as a distinct blow to the opposing forces, as the officers of the cruel General had already begun their investigations and the preparation of a list of revolutionary leaders, who were to be summoned before the military courts and, by natural consequence, shot. On this list it turned out that my name stood, contrary, alas, to all alphabetic precedence, in the first place.

The question led to a lively correspondence between General Linievitch and General Rennenkampf, who was operating under specially conferred powers. No one was prepared to foretell the outcome of it all, when a very unexpected event wrought a peculiar and entirely unanticipated solution. The son of a railway official, who had been shot by order of Rennenkampf, threw a bomb at the latter's car. Although the General happened at the moment not to be in the car and therefore escaped injury, he sensed through this act the element of personal danger and consequently acquiesced in the demand of Linievitch that he return to European Russia, thus relieving our Committee of the danger that was threatening us on the west.

The next battle in our struggle was that with the Little Committee, which was making ever-increasing use of anarchistic methods and was having its forces augmented by particularly efficient individuals smuggled through to it by the political police and with officers from the Rennenkampf detachment. Besides, under the mask of socialism, some of the members of the fighting detachments of The Union of the Russian Nation coming from the west began to join the organization, which confirmed the information coming to us that the Little Committee had started to

organize a fighting detachment to fall upon the *intelligentsia* and bourgeoisie, who were maintaining the State and social order in the Russian Far East.

It was very difficult for us to know how to reach these members and adherents of the Little Committee, who were maddened by their ideas of revolt against the social order. A way out was found by the versatile Nowakowski, an austere, white-haired man, who commanded the respect of all with whom he came in contact. Among the workers on the railway there were many Polish labourers, who had originally been brought to the East by the Polish engineers who constructed the Chinese Eastern Railway. In addition to these the railway employees counted a large number of non-Russian labourers, chiefly Letts, Germans, Italians and Chinese. All of the European element in this body of workers, as a result of their cultural training, were the natural opponents of anarchy and refused to give their support to this feature in the working programme of the Little Committee. The wise Nowakowski, profiting by this condition of affairs, called together the non-Russian Europeans among the labourers and through them set up a strong opposition in the ranks of the Little Committee's partisans. At the same time we sought to influence the Chinese labourers and the smaller groups of western Europeans through the medium of the Chinese officials and of the representatives of the other states. In this effort we succeeded sufficiently to see the board of the Little Committee, which was composed entirely of anarchists, lose a great many of its supporting helpers and followers, and to give us the hope that in the next election we should be able to influence the voting enough to introduce some more loyal members into the board itself.

When the difficulties from this quarter had been overcome it seemed as though our chief danger had disappeared ; but we had hardly time to take any satisfaction from our apparent progress before a new enemy was revealed right in the midst of our own organization. Unexpected conflicts

developed between our republican, monarchist and socialist members and made us feel that the mechanism of our organization had been spoiled. It was only subsequently I learned that our enemies had invaded our very stronghold and had worked up an opposition. In spite of this, however, we continued all our regular activities, with the sole difference that we had great difficulty in carrying through our programme in the face of quarrels, intrigues and a veritable flood of critical oratory, which were the means employed by the opposition to discredit and weaken the Committee's authority. To give birth to the most insignificant regulation necessitated an excruciating labour of speeches, propositions and counter-propositions; and, as the Committee now numbered sixty-three members, this process in the "little parliament," as I dubbed it, consumed entirely too much time. A mass of important matters were held in abeyance by these filibustering methods. I realized fully our danger and clearly saw what it would mean if the direction of the civic life of the Far East should slip from our hands and events should be allowed to follow their chaotic course.

Under the pressing necessity of these unfavourable developments I decided to stage a *coup d'état* and, after consultation with some of my older and more experienced associates, especially Nowakowski, Lepeshinsky and von Dreyer, I accused the Committee at its next sitting, in the presence of the electors, of paralysing obstruction, following this with the announcement that the body as a whole was from that moment dissolved and only five of its leading members retained in a new Executive Committee to control and administer certain features of the social and public life in the Far East. Following quickly upon this radical move, there came to us expressions of confidence from the foreign population of Harbin and Vladivostok. Naturally we had made for ourselves new enemies but, at the same time, we had restored our ability to act quickly and effectually.

General Linievitch also expressed his approval of this turn of events, but General Ivanoff, who was sympathetic with the aims of The Union of the Russian Nation, began to agitate openly against us, fostering antagonism in the Little Committee and in the reactionary groups, while bombarding St. Petersburg with continuous telegrams urging the necessity of dismissing General Linievitch and of arresting our Committee of Five. Following these activities, we were obliged to inform General Ivanoff that his actions had occasioned such indignation that the Five could not be held responsible if his life were attempted by terrorists, as we knew that Vlasienko, referred to above as a very active former member of the Central Committee, had collected a group of daring individuals, who only awaited an opportunity to shoot down the reactionary Generals Nadaroff, Batianoff and himself, as well as all the agents of the political police with Fiedorenko, the Colonel of Gendarmes, at their head. The leaders of the local Harbin police, Colonel Zarembo and Captain von Ziegler, together with the Chief of Police at Vladivostok, gave their assistance in ferreting out these agents, so that, through our knowledge of their personnel, we effectively held this group in check and prevented them from making any active or concerted move. General Ivanoff was thoroughly frightened and remained guarded in his house.

Meanwhile, we also paid marked attention to the conditions in the army, which had been demoralized by the Little Committee and the reactionary groups through the numerous proclamations, calling upon the soldiers to murder their officers, rob the houses of the civil population and revenge themselves upon the ruling Five. We found a means of fighting this danger in the psychology of the soldiers left in Manchuria. We knew that these men had only one wish, to return to Russia as quickly as possible. Profiting by this, we issued a proclamation asking the soldiers' confidence in the Five, inasmuch as its sole aim was to maintain calm and normal life in the Far East

to enable it to evacuate the army as rapidly as possible under the best conditions of transport and maintenance that could be secured. We spent considerable sums of money, giving extra pay to workers engaged in the rapid construction of warm cars for the soldiers and in providing food supplies at the larger stations. We controlled the administration at the front and convinced the Commander-in-Chief of the necessity of summoning before the tribunals such officers and officials as were dishonest in their handling of army matters. Most important of all, we increased the number of evacuation trains. In this manner the danger threatening us from the army was not only overcome but was turned into an asset; for in addition to the soldiers passing Harbin on their way home voicing their enthusiasm for the work of our Committee, General Linievitch also received from St. Petersburg commendation for the excellent organization of the new evacuation movement.

Once more calm reigned in the Far East. We knew that in Russia and in Siberia the Revolution had been strangled and that the leaders of the temporary governments had been shot or hung. Only our Five still possessed full power and freedom of action. Seeing clearly the futility of continuing, we decided to dissolve our organization and return to our former occupations. It was a source of no little satisfaction to us when General Linievitch, on being informed of our intention, asked me not to carry through our plans for dissolution, as he feared the tactless rule of the gendarmerie that would immediately follow, new outbursts of indignation, disorders in the army and the chances of a new disaster.

"Continue your work," he urged. "I hold myself responsible for it, as I consider it absolutely necessary."

Under this impetus we continued functioning, even though we saw standing out clearly before us the spectre of the revenge of the Tsar's Government, a spectre of no uncertain appearance.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FICKLENESS OF POWER

ANONYMOUS letters reminded us with ever-increasing frequency of the approaching danger of death at the hands of the reactionaries and anarchists, informed us of the death sentences already pronounced against us in St. Petersburg or put us on guard by giving us information with reference to the days fixed for the attacks against us. We were always armed and had Vlasienko with his group for our guard. The appointed days passed and left me quite unhurt, though I often noticed that I was being shadowed. Mysterious individuals appeared to be constantly on my trail, though there seemed no need for so much hiding of their movements.

In just a few days I had proof of some of these threatened activities in what occurred at my office. Something jingled, as though a stone had struck the window pane, while in the opposite wall a whitish spot of chipped plaster appeared. Evidently the marksman was not very skilful ; but, quite as evidently, another and better shot could easily be found and then there would be three holes instead of two. In spite of the fact that a similar attempt took place at Lepeshinsky's residence, the work of the Five was not interrupted.

During one of the Committee's sittings I was called out at about ten o'clock in the evening by an attendant, who presented me with the card of a gentleman who had some very important communication to make to me. As I descended the stairs into the reception-room, where I usually received visitors, I found no one there and, on

asking the hall man on duty, was told that a gentleman had been waiting for me but had stepped out on the terrace to smoke. I followed to the terrace but found no one. Looking carefully around, I made out some figures hiding in the shrubbery that grew in front of the Railway Club, where we held our meetings. Understanding what sort of guests I had, I drew my revolver from my pocket and advanced toward them. It is difficult to know just what would have occurred among the shrubs, powdered with snow, if Vlasienko, learning that I was outside, had not come bolting out with two companions and swooped down in my direction with loud shouts. Frightened by this clever show of force, the men behind the bushes broke and fled with Vlasienko's trio in pursuit, though, unfortunately, my callers managed to slip away among the huts and shops to the south of the open space beyond the Railway Club.

Vlasienko returned in a rage over the fact that he had recognized one of the fleeing men as the anarchist Ivanoff. Recounting to the Committee what had happened, he requested permission to be allowed to arrest the leaders of the reactionary groups known to us in the hope that he might find among them this anarchist agent of the political police.

Some days later, while working at home, I noticed a distinct smell of smoke, called my man-servant and ordered him to find out where the fire was. Before he had time to leave the room, I saw smoke coming up through the crevices in the floor and ran down with him into the cellar to find a large bundle of kaoliang stalks, which had been put in through a cellar window and ignited. A few buckets of water were all that was necessary to extinguish the fire, which was only fortuitously prevented from becoming a serious affair.

Attempts in other quarters proved more disastrous to us, notably one where some undiscovered incendiaries made such a successful blaze in one of the official buildings

that the firemen had the greatest difficulty in saving a whole quarter of wooden structures from the ravage of the flames.

The following morning Captain von Ziegler paid me a visit to inform me they had reliable information that a further attempt would be made against my house and that I should be on my guard. Under the insistence of my associates on the Committee of Five that I profit by the warning, I lodged in the houses of my friends, letting no one know in which of them I was to spend the night.

All in all it was a most nervous time for us, with these local attempts against us being supplemented by the news from St. Petersburg that the Tsar's Government had successfully suppressed the revolutionary movement and was corralling all the prominent leaders for a period of trials whose results were clearly foreseen. We were told that investigating judges were already on their way to eastern Siberia and that secret instructions had been issued to the political agents working throughout the Far East.

As these foreboding tidings frightened the Little Committee, the most prominent of the leaders and agitators among the workers began to flee from Manchuria, accusing us of having "drawn them into the revolution" and seeking thus to transfer all the responsibility upon those of us who were unquestionably marked. Some members of the Little Committee even went to General Ivanoff to assure him of their loyalty and to ask for help. The General promised them this and was also of the opinion that the whole responsibility lay with the Central Committee. At the same time we received from the Central League of Unions, whose directors were now hiding in Moscow, a telegram ordering us to suspend the public activities of the Revolutionary Government of the Far East but to continue to function as a secret organization, exerting an influence upon the trend of affairs in the Orient.

As I rehearse these events, I remember the last sitting of our Committee as clearly as though it were but yesterday.

After having considered all the conditions and having carefully evaluated the political situation in European Russia, we reached the conclusion that both our own body and the Little Committee must be dissolved. The most difficult question was how to secure from the Little Committee the decision for dissolution. Knowing full well that the revenge of the St. Petersburg Government would not fail to reach us, we did not want any greater number of people to suffer than was absolutely necessary and we felt that there were not too serious grounds for charges against the Little Committee on the basis of their activities up to date. But we had been informed that, after the departure of some of the most active members, who had fled to escape judgment, the anarchistic and criminal elements reigned supreme and would introduce such policies, after our Committee should dissolve, that blood would submerge the whole country and that a terrible revenge by the St. Petersburg Government would inevitably follow.

It was already two o'clock in the morning, and the five of us were still deliberating as to the best method for bringing the life of the Little Committee to a close. Suddenly an idea struck me and I made a decision, not entirely clear and detailed but full of determination. I told my comrades that I should at once deal with the Little Committee and left the room. It was only the work of a few moments to telephone to my house and have my coachman Nicholas, a young and clever lad, before the building with my drosky drawn by the white Nizam. I ordered him to drive to the headquarters of the Little Committee. We rattled rapidly through the sleeping town until we began threading our way through the labyrinth of narrow streets in the quarter near the railway workshops and finally drew up before a long, old barracks, where the sessions of the Little Committee were held.

Through the dirty panes of the windows I could discern a rather numerous gathering, seated around a big table and engaged in a lively discussion. Quietly tiptoeing

closer, I made out among them the local chairman of The Union of the Russian Nation. I ordered Nicholas to keep watch through the window and, when I should take off my cap, to run up and down outside and make a great outcry.

With these preparations made, I flung the door sharply open and entered. My appearance was so unexpected that all of them jumped to their feet and stood as though waiting for me to make the next move. This lasted but a few seconds, when a man with a cap pulled low over his eyes, who stood behind the table, snatched up the revolver which was lying among the papers before him and fired at me. The bullet whistled somewhere near but only buried itself in the wall. Nicholas then came to my rescue by pummelling the window frame with his fists, running up and down with shouts and cries and generally giving the impression that I had a large company of supporters outside. Again everyone was petrified.

"Arrest this man!" I commanded, pointing out the man with the revolver. "Your building is surrounded by my men, so that no one can escape."

Two of the workers overpowered him, took his firearm from him and set to work carefully tying his arms with a leather thong that lay near by. During this time Nicholas raged outside. His shouts and commands sounded almost continuously, very skilfully giving the impression of several people shouting at once. As soon as the tying of the man was accomplished, I stepped up to the table and said in decisive tones:

"Sit down. The Central League of Unions has issued orders for the dissolution of all revolutionary organizations. The Central Committee is already dissolved. The Workers' Committee ought also to be disbanded at once. Write out a resolution to this effect for me to take away, and to-morrow every one who is afraid of acknowledging responsibility will do well to flee as far as he can."

Without protest they wrote out the short resolution

which I dictated, signed it and affixed their seal. With this document in my pocket, I turned to the man who had fired at me, ordered him to be brought to where I was standing and only then recognized him as the anarchist Ivanoff.

"Now," I said, turning back to the men at the table, "all of you remain in your seats and do not move until I can withdraw my men, who are under orders to shoot. You, Ivanoff, will go with me. Come along!"

I went out with Ivanoff following me, sheltering me from a possible shot from behind. I tumbled him into the carriage and ordered Nicholas to drive us as rapidly as possible to the Central Committee.

Half an hour later Ivanoff was already in prison, where Colonel Zaremba was to take care of him. The astonishment of my associates was pleasantly profound, when I presented them with the act of renunciation of the Little Committee.

This night our sitting was taking place in the right wing of the immense administration building of the Chinese Eastern Railway close to the telegraph office, as we needed to communicate rapidly and without interruption with the other towns of the Far East, for we were under the pressure of liquidating at once all our affairs and were facing the necessity of working the whole night to accomplish this end. However, before dawn we were interrupted by the shouts and whistles of the night watchman. As we sprang to the windows and saw the glare of fire, we understood the cause of the commotion. We immediately made for the door, to learn the location of the blaze, but found to our surprise that it was barred on the outside. When we succeeded in breaking it open, a disheartening sight confronted us. Long tongues of flame were already spurting out with nasty hissing from under the eaves and around the window frames of the main section of the great building. Already the roar of gathering force was plainly audible, and dense clouds of smoke had begun to envelop

the whole structure. As we reached the ground, it was too late to attempt to cross the big enclosed court, so that we had to go out by a side passage to the street at the north and make our way round to the Place before the great eastern façade, where a big crowd had gathered. All this immense office building, covering fully ten acres of ground, was everywhere ablaze, for simultaneous fires had evidently been set in many sections of it. As the avaricious fingers of flame began to tighten and crush the roof, the whole interior shone through the windows like the molten mass of a blast furnace.

Though the firemen and the sappers worked feverishly, all they could do was to try to confine the fire to the building and not allow it to spread to the neighbouring houses. In places I saw the steel rafters bend and precipitate great sections of the floors with their loads of furniture, cabinets or safes, filled with valuable records that could hardly be replaced. Bits of hot stone were blown from the building and, like carbine shots, exploded in the air.

In one part of the crowd some hooligans attacked a group of railway officials and began beating them. But soon the police arrived in sufficient numbers, followed by Vlasienko and his men. They netted a number of bad characters, who turned out to be former criminal prisoners. In the pockets of some of them were found letters from the chairman of the Harbin branch of The Union of the Russian Nation, who was evidently making use of these men for harassing the railway officials.

The fire lasted for three days, until only the stone walls remained to mark the outline of what had been the great administrative offices of the Chinese Eastern Railway. Who had started this fire, and why they had started it, were questions which were never satisfactorily answered. No one ever uncovered the truth about the motive or the culprit. However, the Tsar's Government tried to place the responsibility upon the Central Committee, now dominated by our ruling Five; but even the gendarmes and

the tribunals of the bloody Nicholas II did not succeed in this, as the accusation had no foundation either in logic or in history.

If in so serious an affair one were permitted to be facetious, one might truthfully aver that we went out in a great blaze, though it was no blaze of glory—for this was really the end. The Little Committee, which my sense of the dramatic and of the humorous had so abruptly dissolved, hid itself in fear of the responsibility for which all the leaders in our movement were now to have to answer. Nevertheless, secret printing houses issued numerous pamphlets, accusing the Central Committee of having enticed the working masses into the revolution and of having thus exposed them to the punitive measures threatening. It was not difficult to trace the authorship of these pamphlets to the monarchists and political police, who were acting behind the mask of the workers' organization. Our Central Committee, foreseeing clearly the revenge in store for it on the part of the St. Petersburg Government, ended its existence and began to scatter quickly, some going away while others simply gave up their public positions and returned to their private occupations.

In this way the administering organizations of the life of the Russian Far East during the time of chaos following the war passed out of existence, while the former ones, with their authority weakened and their personnels intimidated by the revolutionary changes, which had been so violent, had not yet the courage to exercise their previous rights and functions. In the towns and in the army this situation at once evidenced itself, in that various town councils and the High Command made strong representations to the leaders of the Central Committee, asking them not to terminate abruptly their activities, which influenced and regulated the military as well as the civil life of the Far East and which served as the only common point of contact between the different conflicting elements of society.

The High Command hesitated to assume again the full responsibility for the evacuation, inasmuch as they feared, from what they had previously seen of the soldiers' attitude, that the troops would not have confidence in their administration and would make further trouble.

The necessities of the situation dictated that we re-assume our rôle, while reason and logic whispered with ever-increasing force that we would rue it. It was because of this that only certain ones of my former associates were willing to come back on the stage. These were Nowakowski, Sass-Tisowski, Dr. Czaki, von Dreyer and Lepeshinsky. With certain other new recruits joining us, we decided to form a Union of Workers with members and affiliations in all private industrial and business organizations and in all public offices and with the purpose of having the Board of this Union assume the direction of the civic life of the country. The working people were ready to acknowledge this new organization, but once more the monarchists intervened to poison the minds of the masses and to set them against us. To clear the air, the Board of the Union issued a proclamation, urging upon everyone the necessity of calmness and of returning to work, at the same time announcing that the Board assumed full responsibility for all the measures being taken. The proclamation had a most beneficial effect and led to a normal and productive period from December 2nd, 1905, to January 16th, 1906. As we afterwards learned during our trial, even the gendarmes and the Public Prosecutor acknowledged this and had reported favourably to St. Petersburg upon us, stating that the activities of the Central Committee and, afterwards, the Board of Union had a strictly state character. Such an opinion was also expressed by General Linievitch, who continued to make use of the authority and influence of our organization. As these reports were not received with favour in St. Petersburg, both the Chief of the gendarmes and the Public Prosecutor were dismissed and General Linievitch was kept in a continuously disagreeable

correspondence with the Ministry of War and the Ministry of the Interior.

Meanwhile life ran along for a short period in an unwonted calm for our much-harassed region. Unfortunately, however, the monarchists and the political police sent out from Russia desired and sought trouble, in order to afford them excuse and opportunity for initiating the repressive measures which had, for the time, been pushed off into the future. For this purpose they elaborated an unscrupulously clever plan, under which The Union of the Russian Nation entered into compacts with the gangs of *hunghutzes* which were always near Harbin and other large Manchurian centres, promising them secret assistance and protection from pursuit. This plan quickly demonstrated its practical value, as attacks on military and railway stores began. Several such supply depots were ransacked and burned, and St. Petersburg was then gravely informed that the soldiers, under the pernicious influence of the Union of Workers, did not perform their duties and thus brought upon the State these dangers and losses. Other denunciations even went so far as to state that the *hunghutzes* were in the pay of the leaders of the Union of Workers and that these leaders were using them to acquire large sums of money with which to pay for their escape and sojourn abroad until the revolution in the Far East should have been liquidated by the Tsar's Government and its active protagonists forgotten.

In Harbin bands of these *hunghutzes* attacked the houses of Sass-Tisowski and Goltzoff, members of our Union, killed their wives, pillaged everything and got safely away without ever being traced. Similar attacks were made in Hailar and Tsitsihar against leaders of our affiliated units, resulting in the death of some of these. In my own case they made an attack upon my car at a small station on the line toward Vladivostok, where I had stopped to inspect a local chapter of our organization. The gang fired several volleys through the windows and the sides of the car, but

without any injuries, as no one happened to be within. Some hours later, during the search made in a small village near the station, the chief of the gang was arrested in the house of a railway official, who was an active member of a branch of The Union of the Russian Nation.

The *hunghutzes* also made some attempts against railroad bridges, which were repulsed but which furnished the monarchists with the opportunity to accuse the Union of Workers with the desire to destroy the bridges and thus create insurmountable difficulties with the army left at Ssupingkai. Such puerile and incredible intrigues engendered in the army disquiet and anger.

After a time, the Tsarist followers tried new methods. They allied themselves with the individuals with criminal records who are always plentiful in the towns of the Russian Far East and who had been attracted in even greater numbers by the war, coming both from European Russia and from the Oriental ports through Shanghai. There began attacks on houses, street hold-ups and incendiary attempts of every sort, all of them executed so boldly and swiftly that the culprits were never taken.

"This is not the work of *hunghutzes*," observed von Ziegler. "I am sure that these operators are Georgians, Armenians and other adventurers from the Caucasus, for I recognize clearly their working methods."

The Captain proved to be quite correct in suspecting the freebooting sons of the towering Colchis ranges, a direct proof of which I myself brought in for him.

CHAPTER XV

A WINGED GEORGIAN AND HIS "FLYING BAG"

IT was the morning of December 22nd. After crossing the viaduct which joins Pristan, or the commercial section of Harbin, with Novigorod, or the New Town on the hill, I turned down in the direction of the big open square where the Chinese theatre used to stand. Practically the only buildings along the thoroughfare were small dirty inns, bars, billiard-rooms and cheap restaurants kept by Georgians and Armenians. If I remember correctly, it was called "The Street of the Georgians." It was nine o'clock and the street was empty save for two figures about one hundred paces ahead of me, one a man with a large leather bag and the other a soldier with a rifle slung over his shoulder.

From the door of a dingy-looking restaurant the head of a Georgian momentarily peeped out and quickly withdrew. But a second later the door swung wide and a tall, thin Caucasian walked rapidly down the street until he had caught up with the pair. I saw nothing suspicious, until suddenly the Georgian looked around, stopped for a moment and then, with a swift movement, made a lunge toward the man with the bag. A knife flashed, the Georgian snatched the bag and, in full view of the slow-witted soldier, made off like a stag in the direction of the market. He had already turned into the market-place, before the soldier regained his senses and started in pursuit. In the meantime I had joined the chase, making these observations as I ran. When I reached the market-place, I saw the Georgian running like a hunted animal and

seeming hardly to touch the ground. Several times the soldier stopped, as though to shoot at him, but was evidently deterred by his fear of hitting some one in the crowd. Suddenly the chase took a different turn, when some soldiers at the corner of the street barred the way and the fugitive in a twinkling threw the bag over a hedge, flashed his knife and disappeared in a small Chinese shop. From this he made his way out into the labyrinth of low wooden buildings and alleyways behind the market and finally was lost by his pursuers.

In the meantime the soldier had been surrounded and interrogated about the hold-up. He explained that he had been escorting the cashier of the bank on his way to deliver to a steamer captain three hundred thousand roubles.

"I am just going after the bag of money!" exclaimed the soldier. "It was right here that he threw it over the hedge."

I surged in with the crowd through a small gateway in the hedge and then listened to a most characteristic conversation among Russians of this type. Not far from the entrance was a large laundry tub, in which two strong Russian women were washing linen.

"Good morning," said the soldier to the women.

"Good morning, soldier."

"Have you seen the bag?"

"We have seen many bags in our life," laughed one of the women.

"And the one which fell here?"

"This also!"

"Where is it?"

"Where was it? Is that what you want to know?" one of the laundresses again laughed.

"Yes, if that is the way you prefer to put it."

"Some one threw a bag over the hedge," she began to explain.

"That much I know; but what then?" the soldier queried impatiently.

"If you know, then why do you ask?" the woman answered, and, pushing up her sleeves, began scrubbing again.

"Answer! I am all ears," the soldier replied, racked with doubt.

"Then I tell you that some one flung the bag over the hedge," continued one of the women, who had hair as red as a flame and was equally bold and care-free. "And it landed in the tub." Then they both began laughing again very loudly.

"In the tub?" the soldier repeated, carefully examining it, in spite of the fact that it was evident at a glance that there was nothing more than a few garments soaking there.

"Yes, in the tub!" reiterated this red-haired jester.

"And now—now it is not there," the soldier mumbled, pressing his head with his hands.

"No, it is not there!"

"Why?" cried the soldier in desperation.

"It said it had no time to wait for you, you birch log! It flew away."

The loud guffaw of the crowd smothered the laughter of the women and the curses of the soldier. However, just at this moment a policeman turned up on the scene and, stepping up to the laundry women, spoke severely:

"You say it flew away? With whom? Answer me quick!"

Under this influence the women sobered down and one of them, after a moment's reflection, replied:

"There was one more woman with us, Katerina Gusieff. She took the bag and went home to hide it."

The policeman, the soldier and the crowd all went along to search the house, which was in another corner of the enclosure, but neither Katerina Gusieff nor the "flying bag" was found there or ever seen again.

Soon the town forgot about this bag, save the two whose lives it changed—a woman in black, who visited the grave of the murdered cashier, and the stupid soldier who spent

a year in prison for his careless performance of duty. But it is always this way in the world: the tears of despair of a single individual or of many do not make a continuing discord or a lasting disturbance in the social life, which after a moment moves on and continues its way indifferent to, and regardless of, the sufferings or emotions of the few. This is the law of human nature, dominated by the struggle for existence. Mankind is under the spell of this struggle, the form of which is changed by the influences of civilization and by the spirit; but man seems not to be able nor to be willing to understand this and, through this understanding, to enter upon a higher plane of social life. Yet this will one day come, will surely come, and its approach is already discernible.

CHAPTER XVI

AN EREMITTE OF THE LAW

IN the meantime darker and darker clouds were massing on the horizon. Owing to the intrigues of the monarchists, the army began to display a boisterous spirit and demanded that the railroad officials, whom they accused of wishing "to keep them for ever in Manchuria," should be punished. Chief among those who asked that revenge be taken upon the Union of Workers was General Batianoff, who had a great deal of influence in St. Petersburg and at the Court.

He proposed to the Commander-in-Chief a punitive expedition to Harbin and, after a very spirited interview with General Linievitch, succeeded in eliciting his acquiescence in the plan. The next day he was already on the way with his detachment. The officials of the stations north of Ssupingkai allowed General Batianoff's train to pass, in view of the fact that he hung the stationmaster at one of the first stops when the man protested that he had no right to allow a special train, not included in the regular schedule, to move without the permission of the Board of the Union.

The moment I learned of this, I immediately called General Linievitch by telegraph and spent an hour in arguing with him and pointing out to him the danger and ramifications of this measure of the Staff. Linievitch finally acquiesced and at once telegraphically recalled Batianoff, who, however, disregarded his superior's orders and continued northward.

This forced us to act independently and, in doing so, to

use our wits and lose no time. We hurried Vlasienko off to the second station below the railway bridge over the Sungari, where he was to meet General Batianoff and carry out our plans for his reception. At the same time we ordered the rails taken up from a section of the track below the bridge, after Vlasienko should have passed. As soon as Vlasienko was at his post, I again telegraphed General Linievitch and urgently requested him to despatch immediately an officer of high rank to overtake General Batianoff and order him to return at once.

It seems appropriate here to give the narrative in the words of Vlasienko himself, supplemented with the telegrams which came to us from down the railway line.

"I am here waiting for Batianoff and your orders," was Vlasienko's first message.

To this we answered by sending a gang of workers to repair the line below the bridge. A few hours later Vlasienko reported :

"Batianoff's train is here. I am talking with the General, who is quietly waiting for the line to be repaired. The train with Linievitch's Staff officer on board will be here in half an hour."

We telephoned to the division engineer at the bridge to inquire if everything was in order and received his affirmative answer. Almost at the same time Vlasienko wired :

"Be ready to receive a guest."

Two hours later we saw a locomotive with a single car attached come booming up the road and pull up very sharply right in front of the main entrance of the Harbin station. The austere General alighted from his sumptuous car and glanced sternly all around. His eyes soon rested on a detachment of armed workers, with Vlasienko at their head, approaching him. Then Batianoff gave another quick survey of the scene and demanded :

"Where is my train and my detachment ? "

The smiling Vlasienko amiably answered :

"Your train, General, is at this moment on its way

back to Ssupingkai and Your Excellency will continue his journey alone."

"Where am I going?" the now troubled General demanded.

"To the Manchurian frontier and then on to Chita," returned the former hussar, standing at attention.

Everything seemed entirely in order, and in the merry flashes from the eyes of Vlasienko the General found something which did not leave him any tendency to protest. A few moments afterwards he swung round and re-entered his car, and the big drive wheels of the engine turned slowly over to begin the westward journey that carried him out of Manchuria for ever, leaving no one among us to regret especially his departure. Once the necessity for ceremonious dignity was removed, Vlasienko broke into a hearty laugh and told us the rest of the story.

"When Batianoff arrived at the station where I was to meet him, I told him the track was under repair but that it would be ready in a little while. In the meantime I was keeping an eye out for the Staff officer's train and, the moment I saw the smoke of it in the distance, I ordered my men to execute swiftly our plan to cut the General's car, which was next to the locomotive, off from the others, at the same time jumping on the engine and giving the engineer the word to open up full speed. The rest of the train with the soldiers on board remained there in the station, and I had also managed to get the aides-de-camp of the General involved in a puzzling telephone conversation with the next station to the north just before the train from the south was due, so that I snatched the poor man off by himself and brought him to you."

On the following day, after Batianoff had already been despatched westward from Manchouli, I learned that our arch-enemy, General Ivanoff, was tearing his hair in his anger at having been kept in ignorance of our reception of General Batianoff and over his inability to have assisted this great dignitary with so much influence at the Tsar's

Court. The moment his spies had uncovered for him all the details of our management of the General's itinerary, he hurried a cipher telegram to St. Petersburg, accusing General Linievitch of complicity in the plot against the "venerable and meritorious General."

Unfortunately this report made a very distinct impression in St. Petersburg and reacted upon us in a most undesirable manner; for, as the evacuation of the army was now nearly completed, Linievitch was recalled to the capital and General Ivanoff made the senior commanding officer in Manchuria.

As soon as old Linievitch, who took a very friendly leave of us, was well away, Ivanoff at once began to use his authority against us. One of his first acts was to free his namesake, the anarchist Ivanoff whom I had arrested, which he followed by ordering the officers who had been members of the Vladivostok Revolutionary Committee to appear before the military court.

The anarchist Ivanoff left Harbin this same day and, as a final courtesy, wrote to me and to the other members of the former Central Committee, assuring us that he would, honour us with his presence when the tribunals of Nicholas II should send us to the gallows. It turned out that his prophecy came aggravatingly near to being the truth, as only one short step separated us from the very end he sketched for us—and this author of these not quite elegant letters was for a long time an executioner in the Transbaikalia. This anarchist, who understood so well how to influence the masses of Russian labourers, had been for five years in a criminal prison as a fiery disturber of the peace, and afterwards, for the sake of a career, became an agent of the political police and finally an executioner!

At the news that the officers were to be had up for trial, Vladivostok staged a great street demonstration, which disturbed not only the military authorities but also the local branch of the Union of Workers. A request came up to our Board for some one to be sent immediately to

consult about the dangerous situation in which this port, so capable of paralysing disturbances, now found itself. Inasmuch as I had previously lived in Vladivostok and had enjoyed most friendly relations with the people of the port, the Board chose me for the undertaking. That very same day a service car was coupled to the first outgoing train and carried me to Vladivostok to be a witness to most critical events.

It was seven o'clock on the morning of January 9th, 1906, when I reached the city and was met by the members of the local Committee, who informed me that the revolutionary groups in the town were planning to commemorate this day as the anniversary of the bloody massacre of workers by the Tsar's Guard in St. Petersburg on the Place before the Winter Palace and in other parts of the capital. These groups had arranged for a new procession as a protest against the returning reaction of the old regime.

Half an hour after my arrival I was in consultation with the leaders of the revolutionary parties. My advice and my requests that they forgo this demonstration proved entirely vain in the face of the finality of their dictum that there was no other effective way in which to fight the Government of the Tsar save by the armed struggle behind street barricades or through the death of unarmed revolutionaries in the streets of the Tsar's own towns, where the blood of the victims could so cry out to, and make an impression upon, other nations, that they would declare their opposition to the criminal reign of Nicholas II and demand that it cease. I understood with poignant personal appreciation that these elements of society were obsessed by an immutable resolution of dumb despair, dictated and congealed by the thought of the approaching revenge of the Tsar.

After my futile meeting with these leaders I went at once to the Commander of the Fortress, General Kazbek, who was the virtual ruler of the whole town. He was a Georgian, a man of no great intelligence, ambitious and

very desirous of making a career for himself. It was my purpose to try to persuade him to remain neutral, as the demonstration was to be of an entirely peaceful character and its leaders were determined not to allow the crowd to make any trouble or disturbance. Kazbek listened to me, smiling rather mysteriously as I spoke. Noticing this, I said to him :

"The fate of Vladivostok depends upon your honesty and wisdom, General !"

These words came almost involuntarily from me and seemed, after I had uttered them, somewhat grandiloquent ; but the future proved that I was quite right.

At eleven o'clock the procession came in grave silence down the Svetlanskaya, the principal street of the town, gathering more and more adherents at every corner. The head of the column stopped and was soon engulfed by its own body in front of the Orthodox Cathedral, where all heads were bared during the chanting of prayers for the souls of those who had been killed in the Revolution. Then the great human mass uncurled and started again. Occasional cries of "We demand a constitution ! We demand a parliament !" marked its progress as the only variant of the complete order in which it proceeded to Aleut Street, that led in the direction of the railway station and past the residence of the Commander of the Fortress. The crowd advanced along this street quietly, and even joyously, at finding that the authorities offered no resistance to its progress.

At the head of the procession was Mrs. Sophie Volkenstein, and following her came Dr. Lankowski and engineer Piotrowski, together with other leaders of the Union of Workers and of the revolutionary groups.

As I mention the name of Sophie Volkenstein, there comes before my eyes a lifelike picture of the quiet, attractive, sweet face of a woman no longer young. Streaks of grey are plainly visible in the black hair. In the hazel eyes and around the fresh lips an expression of crushing despair,

mixed with pain and sadness, speaks out as the tragic composite of the life of this revolutionary personality.

When she was a student of twenty, her revolutionary conscience thrust her into the ranks of the terrorists and gave her a part in an attempt against the life of Tsar Alexander II. For her share in this plot she was condemned to death but had her sentence commuted to imprisonment for life. After some years in a solitary cell at the terrible prison of Schluselburg, about forty miles to the east of St. Petersburg on Lake Ladoga, Volkenstein was sent on the long journey to Sakhalin, that cursed island of banishment and death, of which I had occasion to write more fully in *Man and Mystery in Asia*. There Volkenstein became the good angel of the inmates of the prison, helping them medically and spiritually. Even the administrators of the penal island valued the fine qualities of this unusual woman, full of patience, forgiveness and sacrifice for others, and, in recognition of her qualities and service, finally obtained permission for her to live in Vladivostok, as her health was far from good.

Sophie Volkenstein, with a sad but sweet smile, marched at the head of the procession of demonstrators, thinking how she was now voicing her demand that human and ordinary citizen's rights be granted the Russian people, demanding them from the grandson of him who, because he would not acknowledge and grant these rights, was torn into shreds by a bomb thrown by a revolutionist.

"The Romanoffs have learned nothing and have forgotten nothing," this sad woman bitterly reflected.

The noise of machine-guns interrupted this train of thought with a suddenness as sharp as it was bitter. The whistling bullets cut the cold air; then they were silent. The panic-stricken crowd scattered in every direction, scurrying over the Place in front of the station, sheltering in the school building hard by or fleeing into the side streets. Two bodies remained behind on the pavement. One was that of Sophie Volkenstein, this woman who yearned

for the freedom of a people and who went down without a shadow or spot on her conscience, disheartened and disgusted with vacillating officials, who sacrificed everything sacred to the greed of a career. She fell as she had lived—fighting in the front rank. The other figure that did not run was that of a schoolboy, ten years old.

On this day General Kazbek accomplished much toward the furtherance of his career. In his report to St. Petersburg he telegraphed :

“The faithful soldiers of Your Majesty under my command gallantly dispersed an immense crowd of hostile agitators.”

But life works out its own nemesis for criminal baseness—this is the law of inscrutable, ever-existing Supreme Justice.

The crowd dispersed itself in panic throughout the whole town. The news that the soldiers had fired upon the unarmed and peacefully disposed procession flew from mouth to mouth with lightning speed, reaching the forts on Russian Island and the ships in the Golden Horn. Among the soldiers there were many revolutionary minded, while the sailors were practically all of this mould. The moment they had the news, they snatched up their arms and ran over the ice to the town, while the soldiers hoisted the red banner of revolution over one of the forts on the Island. Only one regiment, which had lately arrived from Russia, remained passive and obedient to the orders of the Staff.

When General Kazbek learned of this state of affairs, he ordered this regiment to turn their pieces on the town and on the ships. The guns from the batteries controlled by the mutinied soldiers and the naval guns on the ships answered the very first shots and brought bursting shells into parts of the town and into the forts which were hidden on the hills above it. Fires broke out in various places, an especially fierce one among the shops in the Chinese quarter. Soon the flames began to surge through the

narrow streets of the Japanese section and thus made their way to the Svetlanskaya in the centre of the town.

Amid the wild flames, the tumult of falling houses and the rolling clouds of smoke there coursed gangs of men like wild jackals, composed of the scum of the town, the members of monarchist organizations and *hunghtuzes* who had gathered from the mountains and the deserted shores of the Amur and had been sheltering in the city. In several quarters armed fights took place, and on this day no one counted the number of the killed and the wounded. Hate, hidden for a long time, the desire for revenge, the lust for blood and spoil, all had at this hour of crime and disaster full liberty of expression. By night three-fourths of Vladivostok lay in ruins. The glare of the gradually lessening fires trembled on the sky, while clouds of acrid smoke drew a veil over the moonlight that had sought to make the city beautiful.

Late in the evening, when I returned to my car, I could still hear the wild shouts of the raging crowd, the carbine shots, the noise of falling buildings and the nervous whistles of the soldiers who were patrolling the streets.

On January 12th I returned to Harbin, where the details of the Vladivostok catastrophe were already fully known. As soon as I had made my report to the Board of the Union, I went to see General Ivanoff to inform him about the happenings in Vladivostok and to remind him that the same fate could visit Harbin in the event of tactical errors on his part. However, the General refused me an interview, so that I had to leave my message with his aide-de-camp and request that he convey it to his chief.

On my return to my residence I found Colonel Zarembo and Captain von Ziegler waiting for me. After they had asked me about the details of the occurrences in Vladivostok, Colonel Zarembo remarked with apparent irrelevance :

"Remember the service car will always be ready and waiting for you."

"But I have no journey in view."

"I strongly advise you to go away. Anxious times are at hand," added von Ziegler.

To my expression of inquiry an eloquent glance was the only answer; and, after shaking my hand, they went away. Two days passed. One might have inferred that everything was quiet. But early on the morning of January 16th Captain von Ziegler came to my house and, in broken phrases, began to whisper:

"A train goes at two o'clock to the south. . . . I shall order your car to be attached to it. . . . Get out at once, for Heaven's sake. Go anywhere . . . I can say no more . . . but go!" He rushed out of the room without even looking back.

I realized that something serious was brewing and, directing my manservant to put a few necessary articles into a small valise, went at once to the house of Nowakowski, who lived quite near me. I wanted to seek his advice and perhaps to go away together with him, after we had arrived at an understanding with the other associates in our stormy revolutionary career.

I knocked at the door, but for a long time no one answered. Then one of the windows was first opened just a slight crack and, after a second, enough to allow the head of my friend's old cook to be thrust warily out. An evil presentiment took control of me, as I hurried to the window and demanded:

"What is the matter?"

"Hush!" she whispered in a quaver of fear and excitement, "my master was arrested during the night and taken to prison."

Jumping into a drosky, I made the round of the residences of all my former associates but, alas, I found no one at home, for all of them had been arrested in the same manner. For the moment I alone was left at liberty; and now I understood the full meaning of the visit of Zaremba and von Ziegler, especially the nervous haste of the second warning of this morning.

However, I did not attempt to leave Harbin, as I felt it only right that I should remain to do what I could for my imprisoned associates and to share with them whatever fate our concerted acts might have in store. Without leaving my house I waited until midnight, wondering when the next development would come. At this hour, while I was seated at the desk in my study, I saw through a window the face of a soldier and his shining bayonet. I arose and went into the drawing-room, only to find the same outlook there, a soldier outside each window. Just as I was saying to myself that they had probably completely surrounded the house, the bell in the vestibule rang, followed by the cry of my frightened servant and the clatter of swords and spurs, as some gendarmes and agents of the political police appeared in the hall.

Then followed quickly a minute search of the whole house and the writing of the official report with all its details of whether I knew how to read and write, whether I was baptized, and the like. An hour later the iron door of a cell in the military prison clanged with a dull sound of finality behind me and, through the little barred aperture in the middle, a guard began staring at me.

"Fifty-three days as President of the Russian Far East, then prison! From President to prison—a dramatic and exciting way, though short withal!"

CHAPTER XVII

AWAITING THE HEMLOCK

I BEGAN to look around me. My cell was not very large, four steps in length and three wide. It had a massive, vaulted ceiling, so low that I could almost reach it with my hand ; but, when I started to do this, the soldier cried in a voice that seemed made for intimidation :

"That is not allowed. I shall shoot !"

I left the ceiling in peace and turned to the window, which was not more than a foot square, was heavily barred and so nearly covered by boards on the outside that I could only see a narrow strip of black night sky and some stars. They shone calmly and indifferently, quite as they had when, in my little-appreciated freedom, I watched them as I hunted in the gorges of the Sikhota Alin, as I cruised the softly undulating waters of the Japan Sea or as I wandered the thronged and laughter-loving boulevards of the Paris I had known so well and that now seemed as far from me as the Palace of the Tsar must have seemed to the life-prisoners in the cells of Sakhalin. Once more the calm and majestic indifference of Nature impressed me.

"That is not allowed. I shall shoot," came again the voice of the soldier and drove my thoughts from me.

"What is not allowed ? To think ?"

"It is not permitted to go near the window. If you do, I shall shoot," repeated the soldier.

I saw that my liberty was destined to be somewhat restricted. Sitting down on the narrow iron bed, I began inspecting the walls by the light of the smoking lamp hanging from the ceiling. The sides of my domicile were

plastered but were terribly dirty, badly cracked and covered with spots and innumerable inscriptions. In the corner immediately above the bed was a big wet-looking place, which, when I touched it, proved to be ice. Evidently water had been leaking in through a hole in the roof and, in the severe cold of the Manchurian winter, had frozen in the room.

"It is not allowed to touch the walls," the soldier grunted.

"You will shoot?"

"Yes," he mumbled, "according to the regulations."

"Wise regulations," I remarked. But the soldier made no answer, only keeping his face there in the aperture and staring at me with apparently anxious, servile eyes.

I was still sitting in my fur coat and cap. When I took them off, intolerable cold penetrated to my very bones, causing me to tremble and shudder so, that there was nothing to do but to get back into my furs and lie down on the inhospitable bed, which creaked and bent under my weight, seeming to take revenge upon me by poking me in the side with a broken bar. Dampness and a sharp, acid odour came from the hard pillow, while the military blanket had a terrible smell and felt almost wet from its contact with the clammy cold.

I lay down with wide-open eyes, thinking of nothing but always feeling the persistent stare of the soldier. Soon I was conscious of the fact that I was really thinking of nothing at all and began to search for the reason of this unusual state of my mind. The answer was not far to seek. Instinctively my whole organism was feeling the uncertainty of each new moment. I had been thrown into this military prison, the most relentless and most stern of all, in a disgusting hole of a cell with frozen, damp walls and with a miniature barred window covered with planks. I realized clearly that at any moment they could take me out into the yard, stand me against the wall and put some nickel bullets into me; and I knew that General Ivanoff would have no scruples about paying the score in this

way. Therefore, of what use were any thoughts of mine? So again I stopped thinking and fell to staring at the dirty rounded ceiling, feeling pangs of cold in my feet and up my back.

But a new enemy recalled me to my senses, coming in squads and attacking me with such energy that one might easily have supposed them to belong to the Black Hundreds of The Union of the Russian Nation and to have been sent against me by General Ivanoff with special orders that no quarter be given. I struggled desperately with them, marvelling all the time that my soldier guard did not call to me that this was also not allowed. He simply observed my defensive campaign and was silent.

I saw units made up of large and small members, coming along the wall in such formations that their strategy recalled to my mind that of a well-directed fleet. The big specimens bore down slowly and majestically like dreadnoughts with great waves rolled back at the water line, while on their flanks the little ones scurried like protecting lines of destroyers. This revolting enemy reached far ahead of its time and employed against me all of the known arts of modern warfare; for, catching me on both flanks, it enveloped me in a disgusting odour than which no modern poison gas could have been more repulsive. They even made air raids by crawling up the ceiling and bombing directly down upon me from this vantage point.

"Listen!" I exclaimed to the soldier, "there are too many inhabitants in this cell and there is really no place for me."

"It is not allowed to talk. I——" he began and stopped.

"You will shoot," I answered, finishing his sentence for him. "Very well, but let it be at all these unlicensed intruders."

At this the soldier turned away and laughed in suppressed tones for quite a moment and, when he appeared again at

the little grille, his face was less threatening and even a bit merry.

Finally the grey dawn began creeping into the cell. After having covered the whole room with its filmy veil of black, the lamp gave one last death-gasp and went out. The night raiders withdrew their fleets. The soldier on guard was changed ; a bugle was heard ; the heavy tramp of soldiers' boots sounded down the corridor ; shouts, laughs, short, sharp words of command and the rattling of kettles mingled with the noise of passing men to tell me that the soldiers were returning to the guardroom with their tins of tea. Again I heard a distinct command and, following it, the words of the morning prayer chanted by the soldiers :

" O Lord, save Thy people . . . "

These words had a strange significance here, where it was really only the Almighty who could save the prisoners shut in this awful hole.

Though I was hungry and thirsty, I did not want to ask for anything, not only because of my pride but also because I was surfeited with those words, " It is not allowed ! I shall shoot."

As I arose and began to walk, taking four steps for the length of the cell and four steps back, I remembered vividly a bear I had watched in the St. Petersburg Zoo, travelling ever in the same manner from one corner of his cage to the other, swaying his head as though in deep despair and casting about glances of inquiry from his little bloodshot eyes.

" I also must have bloodshot eyes, as I have not slept at all," I suddenly thought and even smiled quite involuntarily.

Meantime my guard had been changed, and I found the new one was a young, thin, fair-haired boy, in whose smiling face I was surprised to discover a look of evident good will toward me. I walked for some time, finally becoming giddy with the constant turning motion. For relief I

stopped and began to read the scribblings on the dirty wall. For the most part they were in handwritings that were without skill and showed little aptitude in the use of the pen. Many of them were simply curses and oaths, others were love-verses, while one inscription, made with a sharp-pointed instrument in the plaster, arrested my attention and roused within me some indistinct but unbalancing thoughts. Some inmate of the cell, unknown and now dead, had graven in this plaster his final message of despair to the world :

"In an hour's time I shall be shot. . . . I shall disappear, but my written words shall remain. After all, what is a human life worth ? "

A tornado of thought and sentiment swept my mind and heart. Out of it all there came one thought clearer than the rest, and this was my feeling that, if the lawgivers and judges of the land were placed for some days in the same conditions as these of a condemned man in a cell with such an inscription on its walls, there never would be death sentences pronounced in the society of the twentieth century. And possibly, I thought, if a criminal who merits death at the hands of the law could read this simple but mystically terrible inscription, he might be led to weep over his deeds and to curse his crimes for ever, cleansing his heart and soul in a way unknown to the criminal code and to judges, who think logically and loyally but at the same time with coldness and indifference. The inscription remained, while he who wrote it reposes somewhere in a corner of the military burying ground in a grave without a cross, near which no one will weep or sigh ; yet, after the death of this author of the words scratched on the walls of his prison cell, there remained those who carried wounds in their hearts and a changeless memory of the man who to them was good, dear and beloved.

On that first morning in Cell No. 5 of the military prison I was ready to add an inscription to that of my predecessor and only refrained from doing it out of fear of hearing once

more those sacramental words, degrading to me and to him who pronounced them :

" It is not allowed ! I shall shoot."

I looked at my watch and found it was nearly seven o'clock. After another hour I heard a slight commotion in the corridor, accompanied by a broken conversation. The face of the soldier disappeared from the grille, a key rasped in the lock and the Public Prosecutor, Miller, and Colonel Fiedorenko of the gendarmes walked into my cell.

" You were arrested by order of General Ivanoff and will be tried before a field-military court," the Prosecutor officially announced.

" When will the trial take place ? "

" The trial will be held in your absence in accordance with the provisions of a special circular order from the Minister of Justice," the Colonel explained, as he thumbed over the papers.

I knew too well the portentous meaning of this. The whole of Russia groaned under the bloody hand of a great body of independent military courts, called " express tribunals," which dealt specially with the revolutionists and sentenced thousands of them to death. I felt as though my heart had stopped in my breast and a lump of ice had taken its place. However, I mastered my emotion and, forcing myself to speak calmly, I asked :

" May I write letters to my family, sir ? "

" You will still have time for this," the Prosecutor answered, as he gave a glance full of meaning toward the Colonel. They went away, and the door clanged behind them. As the key once more scraped in the lock, the face of the soldier, full of real pity, appeared at the opening.

After my uncongenial visitors had gone, I was brought a cup of tea with a slice of the black bread of the soldiers as my breakfast. For the noon meal I received a plate of cabbage soup, a dish of black gruel and a piece of bread. In the evening the leg which I had twisted during the fight with the *hunghutzes* at Udzimi gave signs of protest

against the unheated cell and began to be excruciatingly painful. Unable to walk, I went to bed and could not move my foot to get up, when the warder brought me in an evening meal of a plate of gruel, tea and the ceremonial bit of bread. The hip joint was so swollen and painful that I groaned and hissed like an angry python. Fortunately the changing guards at the door of Cell No. 5 did not forbid me to groan, so that I was left this one consoling outlet for my feelings.

This second night again I did not sleep, as I spent it fighting with the fleet and the escadrilles of my enemies of the night before, reinforced by another branch of more important, though less disagreeable, antagonists. These were the big, reddish-grey rats with long, bare tails, which came from holes and cracks around the floor in whole families and soon occupied all the desirable terrain in front of my position. They seemed to think that an armistice had been forced on me at the very outset, as they jumped on my bed and on the bench, where the remnants of the bread and gruel remained and, as confident as guests in a first-class hotel dining-room, took little heed of my protests. When I hissed at them, they squeaked back a thin answer and watched me for the moment with their shining black eyes.

I only broke off the armistice and engaged in open battle, when an evidently more enterprising and audacious beast jumped from the chair on to my bed and began approaching my face, hypnotizing me with his eyes as he came on. I gave a sudden lunge and a sharp cry. Like ripe pears from a tree, the rats were thrown off my bed and struck the floor with a thud, scampering off in all directions. However, they soon returned and gave evident signs of their intention to divide up my blanket, eat my bread and inspect my face. This became too much, so that I opened an artillery fusillade against them, shying one of my boots into the most compact group and following it with another so effectively that a good bit of squeaking told of the

accuracy of my fire. After this they all retreated to their dugouts, and only from time to time a mysterious shadow, gliding through my cell, told me that their scouts were still about. This war with the rats, which sickened and disgusted me, lasted through the whole of my stay in Cell No. 5.

On the second day of my prison life I learned that I was not abandoned by my friends outside. The soldier on guard after dinner was the fair-haired boy whose acquaintance I had already made. For a long time I noticed that he stood in silence and that he was carefully watching the corridor. All of a sudden he caught my eye and gave a hiss, at the same time throwing a folded bit of paper through the grille. Some one from the great realm of liberty outside our prison walls had written me of momentous events. The travesty of a trial *in absentia* had already taken place, and we had been condemned to death by shooting. Then this was the end of it all—" . . . but to the grave."

However, a difference of opinion had developed in the Staff of General Ivanoff, where a large group of influential officers was opposed to the sentence and strongly urged a retrial, not before the "express tribunal" but before the regular military court. Many different elements in the civil population also supported this demand.

"Do not despair," continued my unknown correspondent, "for telegrams have been sent to St. Petersburg in your behalf; and, although General Ivanoff intercepted and stopped the first messages, we have found a way to circumvent him."

This promised help held a shadow of hope, however small—and it appeared very small; for Ivanoff, possessing unlimited powers, need pay little heed to protests and might order any night that we be taken from the cells and shot down, thus making of the question a simple *fait accompli*. This method was one much in vogue during the time of the Tsars, just as it has been under their successors, the Soviets, of which we have an illustration in the shooting

down at Petrograd of the Prelate Budkiewicz in this year of 1924, which has revolted the whole civilized world.

Now to my old enemies, my night adversaries and the terrible pain in my leg, a new foe, the most harassing and unmerciful, was added. This was terror. Any talk in the corridor a little louder than usual, the noise of grounding arms, the entrance of the guard with the food—all of these brought me up with a bound to listen with bated breath for what might be coming next. Then, without the necessary will power to stop myself, I arranged my tie and my clothes, as though I were to go out immediately to return nowhere and never. From hour to hour and from minute to minute I awaited and expected the final messenger.

For two whole days I had no news from the outside world. Finally the watchman brought me a white roll and a sausage, saying that they had been sent me from town. For these past two days, owing to my terror and distress, I had eaten nothing, and even now I should not have eaten these really dainty morsels, were it not for the thought that in them I might find something better and more welcome than food. So, making a pretence of eating, I munched the roll and broke off little pieces, until I found that, surely enough, there was enclosed in it a small tightly rolled tube of tissue paper. Carefully, to avoid detection, I unrolled the paper and read :

"The telegrams went to St. Petersburg."

There was nothing more, and the terror stayed with me, as my situation was really unchanged. Just as before, death was right over my head; and, even though the telegram might make a favourable impression in St. Petersburg, the answer could easily be too late, for General Ivanoff had no need to wait in ordering execution of the sentence imposed.

After another day of this torture of waiting for death had passed, I heard, in the evening, when the prison had grown quiet, the noise of voices and of footsteps in the

corridor. In a moment my door was opened and General Ivanoff entered, followed by the Captain who was in charge of the prison.

"Death . . ." thought I, "the end!"

"Cell No. 5, the political prisoner Ossendowski, condemned to be shot, General," the old Captain announced.

"Nobody asked you, Captain," grunted the General, and, without adding anything, turned and went out.

I heard the door of the neighbouring cell open but I could not catch the words of the Captain.

"Surely they will make an end of me this night," I thought, as I pressed together my icy hands. The night hours dragged interminably for me; the prison was quiet; the guards changed with little noise in the corridors; while from the yard floated up the call of the sentinels:

"Take care! Take care!"

I paid no attention to my night raiders. In my distraught state of mind I developed the idea that they understood my torture and, in mercy, left me alone. Nor did I feel the pain in my leg or have any sense of hunger and thirst. For hours long I sat with my eyes fixed on the door, ever expecting it to open for some one to give me the signal to go. With the highest tension I listened to each sound in the prison and the yard.

Finally this seemingly endless night of torture yielded to a day that was but little less harassing to my overwrought nerves. Then at evening, when I once more in benumbed misery faced another night of expecting death, the Commander of the Prison abruptly entered my cell and informed me that I was to be moved to Cell No. 11. This gripped me as a bad sign, for I knew well the custom of the prison to transfer intended victims to another cell in preparation for the execution. There were no formalities, as I needed only to take my hat and coat and follow the Commander down the corridor to my new abode.

Neither I nor any one else shall ever phrase my feeling, as the door was opened and I was received with shouts

of joy by Nowakowski, Lepeshinsky and three others of my associates on the Central Committee.

"Hurrah!" shouted Lepeshinsky, as gay as ever. "Witte¹ has ordered the decision of the 'express tribunal' to be annulled and our case to be brought before the regular military court. There they will not condemn us to death!" Good news, indeed, was this, after five days of continuous expectation of execution!

I often thought afterwards how entirely relative is the idea of happiness. We struggle during our whole lives, straining our minds and physical strength to gain material welfare and a stable place in society. We are always grumbling and always longing for better conditions. Suddenly a catastrophe overthrows us violently, leaving life hanging by a thread. Then the slightest improvement in the extreme conditions is regarded as a supreme happiness. It was so with me on January 22nd, 1906, and then I understood the meaning of life and the want of reality in some of our ideology.

¹ Count S. J. Witte had now become Prime Minister at St. Petersburg.

CHAPTER XVIII

GRANTED A STAY

AFTER my transfer six of us lived in the little cell designed for only two inmates. Though space was very limited and the quarters were dirty and stuffy, we had hope to dwell with us and cheer us. At once the will to live returned and with it the resolve to have better conditions which set us about securing them.

First of all, we put our abode in order. Asking for water, soap, rags and paper, we scrubbed the floor, which had probably not been so treated since it was laid; we cleaned the walls and the ceiling; we caught all the night raiders, showing them no mercy, and then began a warfare on the rats.

Our first move was to stuff with rags all the holes through which these reddish-grey animals came up from under the floor. Of course, the cloths were not proof against the sharp teeth of the marauding rodents, but we developed a method of counter-attack that proved effective. While we were cleaning our cell, we discovered some bits of glass on top of the stove, which we pounded fairly fine and combined with the rags to make stoppers for the holes, alternating a thickness of cloth with a layer of the powdered glass in such a way that the pincers of our enemies could no longer cut our barbed-wire entanglements.

But this was purely a mechanical device and did not entirely satisfy my ideas of warfare as a trained chemist, looking for some way to harness this great science in our service. Soon I succeeded. As my foot was still most painful, the doctor gave me some quinine, one of the two

drugs used in the prison,—the other was castor oil,—from which I made a solution and soaked the rags in it. The rats could then not touch the cloths, because of the disagreeable, bitter taste, and this, with the powdered glass for those who had no taste, made our barricade secure. After this we never saw our enemies come out of their trenches.

Through the washed and polished panes of our window the sunlight entered more boldly, and life again seemed beautiful. However, my sojourn in frigid Cell No. 5, sleeping on a damp bed next a wall covered with ice, and the moral torture of those days, left their very definite marks upon me. The condition of my leg became so threatening that the doctor wanted to move me to the prison hospital, but, not wishing to be separated from my companions, I begged to be left in the cell with them. Though he nursed me there to the best of his ability, one day, when he had examined my swollen leg and hip joint, he shook his head and muttered :

"If this state of things continues, amputation will be necessary."

In spite of the doctor's fears, my constitution, hardened by my hunting and travelling experiences, proved equal to the task of overcoming the illness, so that after two weeks on my back I was able to get up and even to walk a little between the six beds that crowded our cell.

During this interval no one seemed to be paying any attention to us, leaving us in a silence which made us feel that every one had forgotten our existence.

"This portends well," Lepeshinsky proffered. "This boor, Ivanoff, may calm down or, perhaps, we shall be removed from here—or he may even himself have the cleverness to break his neck! Then the sentence of the tribunal will be lighter for us."

None of us had any illusions about the leniency of the sentence that would be meted out, and practically all of us expected it would be at least banishment up through

the Yakutsk region along the Lena to some of the penal colonies in the tundras of the Arctic region. Such sentences always meant that the condemned were banished to these wild regions for their whole life, yet that hope which never dies always offered the possibility of an amnesty, if the Tsar should have a son or if some other great and happy event in the State life should occur. Consequently, we all prayed that Nicholas might be richly blessed with male offspring and, at the same time, we felt that there existed a reasonable hope of a sweeping political amnesty; for, in spite of the transitory ascendancy of the monarchical reaction, all of thinking Russia had been demanding this for a long time and would probably not abandon their deep-seated desire before the temporary check.

"At the most we shall have a journey to the north at Government expense and shall return eventually," I assured my companions. "I have never yet been in those parts and am curious to have a look at them."

"In general, banishment is better than prison," added Lepeshinsky, "as you can move about and do not always have a soldier with a bayonet, a gendarme or the prosecutor chaperoning you."

"Or His Excellency Ivanoff," muttered Nowakowski, who nourished a rich hatred for this man who had tormented us so effectually. "I prefer to meet General Tapyguine^{*} in the Yakutsk *taiga* every day than this Ivanoff, because the former is more of a gentleman," and the old man boiled with wrath, as he recalled the bearded visage of Ivanoff.

After this we received some communications from the town, smuggled in by some of the soldiers and the non-military prison guards. These brought us word that the military court was making energetic search for valuable witnesses against us, had appointed the judges and was generally preparing for a spectacular trial. Our friends also wrote that the Union of Workers had retained the services of two able lawyers, who were already preparing

* This is the name which Russians give to the bear.

our case and marshalling the witnesses for our defence. They told us that we should soon be summoned before one of the judges for a preliminary inquiry, which would be a first step in the trial.

Then one day the Commander of the Prison came and announced to us that we were to go under guard for this preliminary catechizing. When we were taken from the prison, soldiers with bayonets and gendarmes with drawn swords completely surrounded us, and we tramped thus the length of the whole town, as though we were terrible criminals, dangerous to all mankind. As we passed the town hall, the bank and the temporary offices of the Railway Administration, large groups of officials greeted us with loud shouts of acclamation, women waved their handkerchiefs and threw us flowers. On the Place before the burned offices of the railway a delegation of workers awaited us and met us with a revolutionary song, which rang in parts:

You are the victims of our struggle for the right,
For the liberty, the glory and the honour of the nation.

Not liking this sympathetic enthusiasm or fearing an attack, the gendarmes dispersed the crowd with their swords. Then just a little farther on, near the market, we were received in quite another fashion by a gathering of the scum of the town, who were evidently acting as "supes" for the monarchists, and loosed at us a volley of curses and abuse.

"Death to the revolutionaries! To the gallows with them! To the wall!" came in the hoarse, vodka-moulded voices of the crowd. The cries increased, and stones were even thrown at us, though, as we were ringed with soldiers, none of us was struck. The affair gave us one more proof that the political police had a very definite working arrangement with the guiding monarchists, in that the gendarmes, who had been so energetic a few minutes before in their scattering of the workers, did nothing more than

shout a warning to these missile hurlers. But the men in control of the city police, who such a short time before had been under our direction and influence, did not idly pass these doings; for Colonel Zarembo and Captain von Ziegler, expecting a hostile demonstration against us from this gathering of hooligans, had concealed a detachment of mounted police in a courtyard near the market and sent them out to disperse the Black Hundred with whips.

When we finally reached the office of the magistrate, we had a very unpleasant surprise in discovering this judicial person to be none other than the right-hand man of General Ivanoff, Colonel Fiedorenko. The inquiry began. Fiedorenko manipulated it in such a way as to establish to his entire satisfaction the fact that the Central Committee and the Board of Union of Workers had been acting according to the plans and under the orders of the Council of Workers and Soldiers in St. Petersburg, an organization which was most energetically persecuted by the Tsar's Government and which counted among its members in 1905 none other than Leo Bronstein, known better as Trotsky and until recently the actual Tsar of Soviet Russia. Fiedorenko so persistently distorted all my answers and continued to affirm our union with the Council, that I finally became disgusted and said with impatience:

"The Central Committee and the Board of the Union of Workers, during the whole term of their existence, issued bulletins, from which you could have learned, Colonel, that we organized in response to the orders of the League of Unions in Moscow. Once launched, we worked out plans of our own, as the conditions of life in Manchuria and the Far East were quite unique. I feel sure that, if the working principles which we put into the life here had been successfully introduced into European Russia, the Government of Tsar Nicholas II would have by now disappeared, as well as the political police, whose representative I am now addressing. Also, if we had adopted here in the Far East the plans and methods of the St. Petersburg

Council of Workers and Soldiers, a bloody anarchy would have reigned that would have engulfed the army and the towns, and first of all you, Colonel, and the other leaders of the old regime, who are sowing the seed for a most terrible harvest of revolution in Russia. Please keep this in mind and do not bother yourself to trump up non-existing elements in our trial. We acted entirely openly, hid nothing and will hide nothing ! ”

My comrades, who were questioned after me, deposed in this same strain. After this first inquiry we were compelled to go several times more to be catechized by Fiedorenko, who had not the desire nor the ability, as a matter of fact, to be a close-thinking, logical judge. Also we were summoned before the Prosecutor and in due course arraigned before the tribunal, where the bill of indictment was presented to us and our list of witnesses filed in turn.

Finally on March 18th, 1906, the actual trial was begun and lasted throughout five days. General Ivanoff really succeeded in staging a very imposing arraignment and trial, all a part of his plan to impress St. Petersburg with the extremely dangerous character of the organization he had quashed and to secure for himself a fitting acknowledgment and reward for his effective and faithful services.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SEAL OF AN IRON GRILLE

GENERAL IVANOFF employed every means within his power to secure as drastic a sentence as possible. To carry out his purposes, he brought all the way from Moscow one of the most notably severe military prosecutors, Colonel Kurochkin, giving him for adviser his confidential auxiliary, Colonel Fiedorenko.

However, other powers, favourably disposed to us, were active at the same time. In the first place, there was old General Linievitch, who, after being recalled to St. Petersburg and summoned before a court of inquiry, defended us with the assertion that, without the help of the Central Committee, he would have been unable to maintain civic order throughout the East and discipline throughout the army in the face of the discontent and disorder fomented by the anarchist and other organizations hostile to us.

General Horvat, Director-General of the Chinese Eastern Railway, was the second prominent personage to be heard in our favour in St. Petersburg. He knew well what the revolutionary government of fifty-three days had contributed to the maintenance of the State life in the Far East. In his opinion he was strongly supported by a man who had been known as the great railway builder of Russia, the Polish engineer, Kerbedz, who was not only a close friend of Count Witte's but also was possessed of great influence in Russian governmental circles.

These warring elements struggled and fought during the trial, bringing all the pressure they could to bear upon the

various Government departments and agencies which dominated the judges.

The atmosphere in Harbin was surcharged with feeling and contention. Mounted detachments and infantry patrolled the streets, and the way from the prison to the court was lined with soldiers and gendarmes, as we were brought to the tribunal in carriages, surrounded by mounted troopers with drawn swords. We had the same street reception as on our first appearance, acclamation and flowers from the officials and workers and curses and threats from the monarchists.

Finally we reached the building and entered the hall, taking our places in the dock of the accused. I had the seat of honour as the President of the indicted Government, with the grey-haired, serious, alert Nowakowski next to me and beyond him Lepeshinsky, Kozlowski, Sass-Tisowski, Tichino and the others, twenty-two in all. The hall was full of people, counting representatives from several organizations, members of the foreign consular body, of the Press and of foreign firms, delegates from the army and from other towns throughout the whole Far East.

The long and tedious procedure began. We were obliged to repeat what we had already told the magistrate at the preliminary hearings. When the witnesses were called, ours defended us vigorously and obstinately, whereas those for the prosecution provided very little evidence to involve us. Only two typesetters from the railway printing office, whom we judged to be well paid, testified that the Central Committee was an integral organization of the Social Democratic Party, which fact would have connected us directly with the Council of Workers and Soldiers in St. Petersburg, whose leaders all belonged to this party. During the trial we learned, to our amazement and surprise, that one of our members, the lawyer, Kozlowski, belonged to this party. This disclosure had a markedly detrimental influence upon the court, inasmuch as the sentences, it

developed afterwards, would have been much more lenient, if this *dénouement* had not occurred.

On March 23rd the final phase of the trial was enacted. In summing up, the Prosecutor insisted that we be given the maximum sentence, eight years of hard labour in prison. Answering on our behalf, our counsel exposed the inadequacy of the evidence of the prosecution, whereupon the Prosecutor, speaking in rebuttal, repeated his demand for a maximum sentence, seeking to bulwark it with the statement that the Central Committee was a destroying, anarchistic power, which had caused the State great moral and material losses.

"Your Honours," he continued, "do not allow yourselves to be misled by these individuals, obscure and mostly of non-Russian extraction. We have heard their counsel telling the Court that the Central Committee took into its hands the helm of the State life in the Far East and that the order introduced by it saved to the Government twenty-one million roubles. As it was confirmed by witnesses and the Chief Comptroller of the railroad, I do not take issue with this statement and am ready to accept it. But, gentlemen, remember that the Central Committee is all the more dangerous, in that it has taught the revolutionaries how to act outside the authority of the Central Government and how to manage the ship of State. The acts of this Central Committee will be a school for future revolution against the reign of His Majesty the Tsar!"

This was a great *faux pas* on the part of the Prosecutor, who, carried away by his own eloquence and his desire to evince his loyalty to the Throne, gave us a sentence that became the strongest element in our defence. Our lawyers at once profited by the error and turned our adversary's own words against him to disprove his assertion about our anarchism and the losses we had caused the Government.

On the judges' bench sat the five members of the military court, presided over by their chairman, while ranged behind them were General Ivanoff and his Staff with Colonel

Fiedorenko, all sitting in easy chairs below the picture of Tsar Nicholas II. As our counsel finished his clever use of the Prosecutor's gratuitous material, some of the judges were seen to smile slightly, as they watched the Prosecutor, in evident discomfiture, bending over his documents and thumbing them page by page, as though in search of some important matter he had missed. Fiedorenko threw a quick glance at their oratorical champion, which brooked no good for him, and leaned over to whisper something to General Ivanoff, who turned red with anger and began pulling expressively his long black beard.

"I have nothing further to say," the Prosecutor stammered, as he put his documents in his brief-case.

"We also rest," our lawyers announced.

"Accused," said the Chairman of the Court, "you have the right to be heard before the bench announces its decision."

I had to speak first and did so briefly, closing with the words:

"The Prosecutor was honest enough to testify to the State character of our activities. Now I appeal to the honesty of you Judges and Generals present here to confirm my assertion that, if the Central Committee, at the moment when the revolutionary passions exploded, had not succeeded in concentrating effective authority in its hands, you gentlemen would surely have been killed by the bullets of your soldiers or hung on the lamp-posts by the maddened and lawless anarchists. This is the only thing I ask from the Court and from the consciences of those who sent us to this bench of the accused."

Each of my companions spoke in turn. Nowakowski was listened to with great attention, as he gave a detailed analysis of the conditions prevailing in the Far East for the benefit of the judges, who had specially come from European Russia for this trial and to whom these were entirely unknown, owing to the fact that no one in St. Petersburg or Moscow had any knowledge of either the

state of affairs in this region before the Revolution broke out or of the constitution of the various layers of the local society and of the character and ideology of the local population.

At about eight in the evening the session ended and the judges retired for deliberation. After what was later learned to have been a stormy four hours, they returned at midnight and read their findings. The President of the Revolutionary Government, who at this unfortunate moment happened still to be myself, was condemned to eighteen months of fortress prison, without any deduction for the two months already spent in the military prison awaiting trial. Nowakowski was given one year and the rest shorter terms, with the exception of Kozłowski and Lepeshinsky, whom the Court singled out as belonging to distinctly revolutionary and socialistic parties and to whom it gave, in addition to the original sentence of one year, an extra term of two years for the former and one for the latter. Altogether it was a very merciful finding, if one can speak of mercy in connection with a matter which ought not to have been reviewed and punished by a tribunal at all.

We returned to our cells as prisoners of a higher social class than the others in the military gaol. Imprisonment in a fortress had in the Russian code a special name, "honourable custody" or the *custodia honesta* of the Latin, and carried with it certain privileges, such as the right to wear one's own clothes, to receive food and books from home and to have a walk each day in the prison yard. We wondered how much we should benefit by these privileges, as there was no fortress in Harbin. However, General Horvat came to the rescue by proposing through St. Petersburg that a special political prison should be established in Harbin, as there were many political prisoners in the town.

A private house toward the north end of the Bolshoi Prospect was rented, the windows were barred, strong doors installed, rooms for the soldiers and keepers prepared and the whole house and rather spacious yard were surrounded

with a high board fence. Not long after the trial we were already in our new quarters and began to settle down for our long term of enforced residence. We requested from our home clothes, linen, books and papers, arranged for a regular supply of food to be sent us and gradually became accustomed to the new life.

CHAPTER XX

PRISON "EL DORADO"

THE temporary political prison in Harbin was, by comparison with other places of incarceration, a veritable "El Dorado." The quarters were large and clean and well lighted by the big windows. Nowakowski and I were assigned to one cell, where we settled ourselves for the long term ahead of us.

"After all, I am to live here eighteen months," thought I, "and consequently, I must arrange everything as agreeably as possible, in order that this period of inactivity and restraint may not leave its undesirable marks upon me."

First I had brought from my house my books and the scientific notes which I had made during various excursions throughout the Russian Far East and in the laboratories at Vladivostok and Harbin. For whole days and nights I worked without ceasing. During the first three months I wrote almost constantly and, with the permission of Prosecutor Miller, sent off to Warsaw to the monthly magazine, *The Polish Chemist*, and to *The Journal of the Society of Chemistry and Physics* in St. Petersburg a number of articles on the chemistry of coal, petroleum and gold, as well as some chemico-technical studies of several East Asiatic products such as vegetable oils, commercial fertilizers, seaweeds containing iodine, Chinese and Japanese bronzes, etc. The former Minister of Education in Poland, Dr. B. Miklaszewski, who had also been a political prisoner in Russia, was then the editor of *The Polish Chemist* and, in printing my articles, placed under my signature the rather unusual address of "Political Prison, Harbin." It is just

possible that I am the only scientist in the world who has had scientific works published with such an address.

I read much during this time and, among other volumes, I carefully studied two of the works of the remarkable self-made scholar, N. A. Morozoff, who attained to great learning after having spent twenty-four years in a solitary cell of the political prison at Schlusselfburg and who quitted the prison in 1905, taking with him only a single bundle, containing three thick manuscripts, *The New Explanation of the Periodical Law of Chemical Elements*, *The Astronomical Basis of the Apocalypse* and a collection of verses full of hope and the bright joy of life. These volumes were very interesting and thrilling, not only from a scientific but also from a psychological standpoint, as the works of a man absolutely cut off from the turmoil of life, immersed in his own thoughts and in a sort of mystic, prophetic ecstasy.

Very soon I came to understand the meaning of solitude to this man. I can now myself compare two kinds of isolation which I have learned to know through actual experience. In 1920 I spent four long winter months in the unbroken solitude of a Siberian forest, hiding from the Bolsheviks and lying in wait for the spring under the roots of a great tree overturned by a storm. In those surroundings, left alone with nothing but my own moral and physical forces, I felt strongly the quick recrudescence of the primitive man,—hunter, fisherman and warrior,—whose every nerve responds to the power and beauty of Nature and who, at the same time, sees at every step the proofs of the all-pervading presence of the Wisdom of God, the Creator, whose invisible hand directs and guides the life of the smallest living thing.

During these months in the forest I observed in myself unquestionable changes, the resurrection in my soul of primitive mysticism and of something more, something disconcerting and almost fear-inspiring for a civilized man trained in the principles of modern science, though it was

beautiful at the same time—the return of telepathic sensibilities, which have been almost completely lost by men of to-day but which are a very definite element in the equipment of the wild beings around us.

In the prison cell at Harbin in 1906 I came to know that other solitude of isolation in the very midst of one's own kind. Having as my companion the silent Nowakowski, immersed in the study of Holy Writ, and afterwards living quite alone in the cell, I felt other spiritual changes coming over me. I acquired the ability to understand the whole spiritual process preceding a crystallized thought. As I read the works of Morozoff and of other scholars and writers, I saw before me these men in person and the surroundings in which they created their work; sensed the psychic evolutions of their minds and souls; felt and thought as they had, straining toward the same goals they had sought to reach, travelling with them their roads of logic, tortured by their despondencies and kindled by their interior spiritual fires.

Some years later I had the opportunity to review these experiences, when talking with Morozoff and also with the well-known Belgian poet, Verhaeren, whose works gave me during my prison days many unforgotten moments. I had then the impression that I had unwittingly seen the future fate of these persons, whose souls had burned before my eyes, so that I could study them as though they were my own. During those days in the silent prison cell I did not, however, realize fully nor register definitely these impressions, these intangible movements of the soul, impossible to lay hold upon, these shadows of things not yet existing which glided before my eyes. But, when Verhaeren, aflame with the fires of new creation, was killed in the street, leaving after him the bitterness of the cruel injustice of Fate and of injury perpetrated by blind accident, then I remembered the vision of those black, hope-enshrouding clouds, veiling the pale dead face of the great poet, which started from my soul as a gruesome spectre and tortured me for days in my

cell, where often for long, unbroken periods I heard nothing other than the monotonous cries of the guard :

"Take care ! T-a-k-e c-a-r-e !"

At this time, when the prison walls separated me from life with all its noise and struggle, when I felt myself absolutely alone, I was surrounded by unknown, invisible beings rising up out of the unexplored recesses of my soul, who spoke with me, advising and instructing me. I realized then what extraordinary, invisible powers are lodged within the transient human body, what treasury might be obtained from these powers, were they not lulled to sleep by the opiate of modern life. I could call up the figures of all whom I knew with such vivid distinctness that they appeared before me and whispered to me in almost real voices. I felt the warmth of their bodies, I even heard their breathing and the sounds of their movements. It was a state strange and terrifying, but at the same time waking a thrill of bliss. I had the impression that I was in another world, in which my body and soul were changed, making of me a higher, more nearly perfect and non-terrestrial being.

I remember in greatest detail how one of my friends came to see me on visitors' day and brought me the news that everything was ready for my escape from prison and for my safe despatch to Japan. Similar proposals were presented to the prisoners from Vladivostok, Dr. Lankowski and engineer Piotrowski, and to my Harbin associate on the Board of the Union, Dr. Czaki. These efforts were made on our behalf, as there existed reason for fearing that the St. Petersburg Government would not be satisfied with simply having us serve short sentences in prison but would invent some additional and special punishment for us, as we had been the most active workers and were Poles besides. Lankowski, Piotrowski and Dr. Czaki profited by the opportunity and escaped to Japan, later going on to the Hawaiian Islands, from where Dr. Czaki went into the Argentine.

Piotrowski was killed in Poland in 1920 during the war with Soviet Russia. At this time I was so obsessed by

the experiences which I have just described that I was afraid even to think that this unusual spiritual state might disappear, for I felt that it would have been a great loss to me. To the despair of my friends, I refused to flee. Before the score was fully settled, I had to pay a heavy price for this decision, but now I do not regret it, as it was only in this way that I earned the opportunity to see the bottomless pit of misery and the naked soul of man, which brings with it understanding, readiness to forgive and the calm of thought. After such experiences one does not say: "This is a bad man," or "This is a good man," but simply "This is a man carried along by a bad, or a good, current of life."

Unconsciously and without having yet read or heard the wisdom of Buddha Gautama, I arrived at the same conclusion as that which the great teacher formulated so poetically and wisely in the words:

"Man! You can rise higher than God Indra and fall lower than the worm crawling in the marsh."

And so I remained in my cell and, together with the silent, thinking Nowakowski, continued our strange, never-to-be-forgotten life. Although I did not interrogate him, I knew that he was living through similar experiences but that, being of an unimaginative and uncommunicative turn of mind, he did not dwell on them or speak of them.

Some weeks after having remarked these psychologic changes, I ceased to sleep, though this cannot be said to be a strictly accurate statement regarding my condition. Sleeplessness is a state of ill-health, when one feels tired and longs to sleep but cannot; whereas I felt no mental fatigue and did not wish to sleep, but usually read or wrote eighteen hours out of the twenty-four. My mind continued quite fresh and my imagination unusually active. Together with the loss of a desire to sleep, I also lost my appetite and could not eat either meat, fish or ordinary bread, so that I had to ask to have sent me from home tinned fruit and zwiebach of white bread, on which I lived for some time, with the addition of a morning and evening glass of

strong tea. My usual daily ration fell to one tin of pears or peaches, four pieces of zwiebach and two glasses of tea.

Mentally and spiritually I felt quite normal but became physically weakened and thin, for a long period never going out for a walk and endeavouring to move as little as possible. I also gave up my morning exercises, a practice which I had kept up without interruption since my boyhood, even during the crowded conditions in Cell No. 11 before the trial. I do not know how my experience would have ended, if strange and very sudden changes in my physical condition and in my state of health had not forced me to call in a doctor. First of all, I was struck by the very rapid growth of hair on my head and face, which necessitated having my hair cut once a week and shaving twice a day. Even so, by late in the evening my face looked as though it had not felt a razor for days. This phenomenon lasted for a month; then I began to fatten, or, more correctly speaking, to bloat terribly. My face became waxlike and yellow and almost round, my lips bloodless, while my hands and feet were always cold and, from time to time, my heart seemed to contract in my breast, setting up an indefinable terror in me.

"Something is wrong with me," I finally decided. "I must consult the doctor, for I do not want to die in prison."

The doctor came this same day, overhauled me thoroughly and asked about my way of living.

"Do not work for two weeks, eat more, walk and exercise as much as possible. Otherwise no one will be able to help you and—there can be only one result."

Accepting my new campaign orders, I put books and notes in my trunk, closed my inkstand and went into the yard. It was already summer, the advent of which I had almost failed to remark in the seclusion of my cell. The prison enclosure was dirty and unattractive, full of refuse building material, which had been left there after the place had been remodelled into a prison for us. Having no liking for aimless work, aimless walks and aimless movements,

I decided to turn the doctor's prescription for exercise to the good of the prison life. Summoning some of the young prisoners to help me, I began to clean up the yard and, when this was accomplished, to make some beds for gardening, in which I planted peas and tomatoes. Making use of my studies of commercial fertilizers, I secured through the warden and applied such materials which forced energetically our delinquent plantings and gave us very gratifying crops. In another bed we had flowers—asters, sweet peas and gillyflowers, which later provided me continuously with bouquets for my table.

Slowly, through careful dieting and living, I regained my appetite and the ability to sleep, and was soon able to begin some gymnastics, which gradually restored to my muscles their former elasticity and strength. This I often tested and proved in wrestling bouts with the strongest prisoners and even with some of the soldiers, while the Commandant of the Prison and the officer on duty had slipped off to the neighbouring restaurant for a glass of wine or a game of billiards. Finally this regime brought back to me my normal health.

CHAPTER XXI

NOWAKOWSKI'S BOMB

THESE weeks spent in such close contact with the other residents of the prison gave me the opportunity for many interesting observations and fascinating experiences. The first came with Nowakowski. The calm, serious old man underwent a great change of disposition. Though he grew angry and nervous, his relations with me were always friendly and good ; for, understanding instinctively that an enforced companionship in one room is a difficult and disagreeable trial, I always endeavoured to make my presence as unobtrusive and as little obnoxious as possible. I spoke only when he himself started the conversation, made no disorder or noise in the room and always moved as little and as quietly as possible ; and, as Nowakowski bore himself in the same way, we got on very well together. We understood each other almost telepathically, so that we hardly needed to use words. On the other hand, everything outside of our cell angered the old man. The loud steps of the guards in the corridor so upset his equilibrium that he would run to the door and, hammering it with his fists, cry out :

“ You put us into this ‘ stone bag ’ and even here leave us no peace, you executioners ! ”

He scolded the prisoners and soldiers, when they ran about in the yard ; he continually complained about the badly baked bread which we received from the prison kitchen. One day, when he was especially out of humour, it happened that the Prosecutor and the Colonel in command of the gendarmes visited the prison. The news of this

visit had an effect upon Nowakowski entirely comparable with that of the red cloak of the toreador on the maddened Andalusian bull in the *Plaza de Toros*.

"Executioners! Thieves! Robbers!" he muttered, snorting loudly and angrily.

We heard the doors of the cells being opened one after the other and finally our turn came.

"Have you any complaints to make about your treatment?" asked the Prosecutor, from behind whom peered out the red, smiling face of the Colonel. I was silent, but Nowakowski did not choose to follow my lead and let go at them:

"We have one principal complaint—we are illegally detained in prison, in spite of the fact that we are merely peaceful and cultured men."

The officials were surprised and gazed for a moment in silence. Finally the Prosecutor rebutted with:

"We are in no way responsible for this; we cannot change the sentence of the court. What I am concerned with is complaints about everyday occurrences."

"Look what sort of bread they give us!" exclaimed Nowakowski, snatching the loaf of bread and thrusting it under the nose of the Prosecutor. "The proper baking of bread, I suppose, is no concern of yours either?"

The Prosecutor examined the bread, sniffed it, felt it and handed it to the Colonel, who in turn inspected the loaf, sniffed it, felt it and returned it to Nowakowski.

"Yes," he muttered indecisively.

"Yes what?" the old man asked severely.

"Bread," the authorities answered in return.

"Not 'bread,' but badly baked bread," Nowakowski exploded. "I insist upon an inquiry into the matter."

"Well . . ." was all the Prosecutor had to say, as he bade us good-bye and went out with the Colonel.

After they had gone, Nowakowski, with his round loaf in his hand, took up his post at the door and watched as a cat watches at the hole of a mouse. Then, just as

the authorities, accompanied by the Commandant of the Prison and the officer on duty, reached the head of the stairs, Nowakowski jerked the door open, rushed out into the corridor and shouted :

" A bomb ! A bomb ! " as he assumed the classic pose of the discus thrower and hurled the loaf after them. " The bomb " landed with a thud and bounded along the uneven flooring in their direction. The result was as electric as it was unexpected ; for the Prosecutor, the Colonel and after them the Commandant and the watchers, jostling one another in panic, fought to get down the stairs away from the bomb of the angry old man. Only the officer on duty kept his head, waited till the loaf had spent its fury, picked it up and, bending over the banister, called out :

" It is only bread, common bread ! "

" No, not ' common bread ' but uncommonly badly baked bread," Nowakowski shouted at him.

When the old man was summoned to the prison office for this joke of his, I waited with impatience for his return. Contrary to my fears and expectations, he came back quite pleased and smiling, having left in the office all his spleen and anger, which was often only the result of nerves, that plagued the prisoners in their unnatural confinement.

" How did you get out of it ? "

" The Prosecutor, putting on a bold front, asked me what I called out when I threw the loaf. He was making himself look very terrible, to recover the amount of impressiveness lost by the rapid retreat he beat before the soldiers and watchers out into the prison yard. I answered him quite suavely : ' After throwing the bread, I called out to you that you had forgotten to take the loaf for the inquiry and that it was more like a bomb than bread.' Of course, I never said anything of the sort. I simply wanted to frighten these executioners of the Tsar and had to find some way out of it. Now we shall certainly have good bread and, what is more, we shall never see the Prosecutor again, which will be a great consolation."

And it was the calm, silent Nowakowski, always deeply immersed in thought, who played such a trick! Equally unusual was the result, for we did really have good bread afterwards, and the Prosecutor never paid us another visit.

CHAPTER XXII

TRANSIENTS AND TUNDRAS

OUR prison colony constantly increased, as new political prisoners were brought in, some of them already sentenced and others held to await their trials. As there was nothing to curb the excesses of the revolutionary groups after the Union of Workers had been dissolved, acts of terror, agitation against the State and attempts against the depositaries of Government funds to secure money for revolutionary purposes became rather frequent occurrences in the territory of the Far East. Their presence and their despondency reacted strongly upon all of us; for you must know that a prison is very excitable. Spread the news that a man condemned to death is within its walls, and the spirit of it changes at once. A morbid concentration sets in, which often runs into despair or real madness.

I remember that one morning a good-looking, fair-haired young man, named Arsenieff, was brought in. Perhaps twenty-five years old, he already carried a look of profound sadness in his dreamy blue eyes. That same day he was tried and condemned to death. His story was simple and easily understood by any one who knew the Russian life. The gendarmes shot his brother, a revolutionist, in Blagoveschensk, whereupon Arsenieff shot the commander of the gendarmes in revenge and fled to Harbin, where he was discovered and arrested.

He returned from the court at nine o'clock in the evening and, going from cell to cell after his arrival, he looked sharply and quizzically into the faces of each one of his fellow-

prisoners. When he came to our cell, he carefully closed the door, looked us straight in the eyes and whispered :

" I am condemned to die. They will certainly execute me to-night, as they will be in a hurry to have the thing over. Will you help to save my life ? "

" Of course ! " we both assured him.

" Thank you," he whispered fervently. " When the supper is brought, I want as much of a commotion as possible to be made throughout the whole prison. Profit by the slightest chance to make all the disturbance you can, and during this distraction I shall work out something for myself."

As soon as he had gone out, Nowakowski and I quietly made the round of the cells and gave all the prisoners directions as to the part they were to take in the commotion. It transpired fortunately that no specious pretext had to be resorted to, owing to the fact that the prisoners who were not receiving food from home were served with a cabbage soup in which some worms were found. The commotion started from somewhere and swelled like a roll of thunder through the prison with the curses, cries, the hammering of fists on tables and doors, and loud demands to see the Commandant of the Prison, the officer on duty, the Prosecutor and even the Tsar himself. When such a row is set up by two hundred nervous, excited men, the noise can become dreadful. The whole staff, down to the last of the soldiers and the cook's helpers, rushed up to calm us. The passers-by in the street, attracted by the cries in the prison, stopped in astonishment. No one remained in the prison yard, and the frightened guards even forgot to close the doors into this court. Only the sentinels outside the high board fence kept their posts.

Arsenieff carefully watched the developments and, when the authorities and staff had all gathered in the most populous and most protesting cell, he slipped unnoticed into the yard, noiselessly climbed the fence until he could see over the top, and there made out a guard not two paces away

from him with his head turned in the other direction, as he stared into the upper windows of the tumultuous prison. Back of the prison yard was an open lot covered with a rank growth of high weeds and thick bushes.

Suddenly Arsenieff drew himself up and jumped down behind the astonished soldier, who from fright fumbled and dropped his rifle, while the fugitive was making off for the bushes, and only then let go a shot at him and blew the warning whistle that started all the others. Arsenieff succeeded in getting away and disappeared without a trace, while the soldier, after reporting how the thing had occurred, was tried and sentenced to four months in prison for having bungled the matter. I never heard anything more as to the fate of the daring prisoner. Did he ultimately succeed in evading the authorities, who must have instituted a doubly careful search for him; or was he finally captured and executed, as a man already condemned and in addition a fugitive now placed beyond the law? I remember only his dreamy and very sad eyes.

Severe criticism and considerable difficulties were visited upon the authorities of the prison as a result of this escape, and we prisoners were also punished by being deprived of our walks for a week and by having all the doors of our cells locked, so that there could be no further communication between us. However, these measures did not prevent another one of our inmates from vanishing like camphor.

Among the prisoners there was a young boy of only seventeen, whose face, as beautiful and delicate as that of a girl, attracted every one's attention. His long curly hair was also as soft and fine as that of a woman. His name was Kostenko, and he was a telegraph operator. He had been implicated in an affair for which he was under sentence of banishment to the north of Siberia.

One Sunday when there were many guests in the visitors' room, a young girl came to see Kostenko. She gave him a little package, took off her hat and coat and, seating herself by the window, began laughing and talking loudly with

the good-looking boy. When the signal was given for the closing of the visitors' hour, the prisoners returned immediately to their cells, while the guests filed out, presenting their passes to the guard as they went. After every one had gone, the Commandant of the Prison, passing the reception-room on the way to his office, noticed the young girl seated at the window.

"What are you doing here?" he asked in astonishment.

"I cannot go out, because Mr. Kostenko took my hat and coat, put them on, fixed his hair to make it look like a woman's and left the room, after telling me that he wanted to amuse his prison mates with his new costume and that he would be back in a few minutes. I am waiting for him to return."

"What a state of affairs," the Commandant muttered, "jokes and games in the prison! I'll make it hot for the keepers."

He rang and ordered Kostenko to be brought in. After a considerable delay a frightened-looking keeper returned and reported:

"The prisoner Kostenko is nowhere to be found and must have escaped, sir!"

Minute search was immediately instituted but failed to disclose the missing boy.

"Where is your pass?" the Commandant demanded of the girl.

"It was in the pocket of my coat," the girl answered, and began weeping. "Please give me the value of my hat and coat, for I am a poor girl and work hard for my living. Your prisoner has robbed me, and I shall make a complaint about it."

But tears availed nothing. When the examining magistrate arrived and began looking into the matter, he ordered the girl to the little Cell No. 3 to be held during the search for Kostenko, because she was suspected, in spite of her tears, of being the accomplice of the fugitive. She remained in custody for two weeks, during which she complained

bitterly about the losses caused by the "scoundrel of a prisoner," as she disdainfully labelled Kostenko. When the fugitive was not found after a fortnight, she was set free. As she was about to leave and was saying good-bye to a group of Kostenko's friends, she half closed her very active, sparkling eyes and whispered :

"He must be already in Shanghai. . . ."

She went merrily off without any hat and coat but with the pleasing thought that she had probably saved the life of a fellow-creature and one that was very dear to her. The prisoners left behind remembered her for a long time and very often referred to her as "the sly she-eagle."

However, some other attempts at escape were not so successful. I remember three labourers being brought in one evening. Shortly after the keepers put them in their different cells, they went to the wash-room, whispered a moment among themselves and suddenly bolted through the kitchen into the yard, where they scrambled up over the fence and ran for it. Several sentries fired at them and all three went down. When the soldiers and keepers reached them, two were already dead and the third had a wounded foot. For his attempt to escape this one was tried two months later and received six years of hard labour. Such events ruffled the calm of the prison, sometimes in a mirthful and sometimes in a very sad manner.

Gradually I began to take a more active part in the prison life. Finding among my accidental housemates many young men who were quite illiterate, I proposed to Nowakowski that we start some instruction work and soon had formed with him classes in reading, writing and accounts. In addition we gave daily lectures in history, literature and physical science, to which the keepers, the soldiers and finally even the Commandant and his assistants, most of them but very poorly educated, came and listened attentively. The prisoners were attracted to us, respected us and were really fond of us. We enjoyed the respect of the

authorities also and profited from this, in that, whenever punishment was meted out to the whole prison after some one had escaped, exception was made in the case of Nowakowski and myself, so that our habits of life were in no way restricted or changed.

It was interesting and curious to observe the psychology of individuals thus kept continuously within four walls and obliged to live together. I often saw serious and well-educated men quarrelling about some such trivial matter as that one of them had taken a bigger piece of bread or meat than was his rightful portion, and, because of this, turning enemies and refusing to shake hands with each other. It was a strange phenomenon, induced by the abnormal and aggravating conditions of prison life and by the nerve-wearing necessity of constant and intimate association throughout long months with others not of one's own choosing.

I saw two engineers quarrel and become estranged in bitter hatred over . . . kittens! There was an old cat in the prison kitchen with some very attractive, vivacious little kittens. One of the prisoners, an engineer, took the kittens to the common cell, where about twenty men were living together, and constituted himself the guardian of these offspring of the kitchen-domiciled mother. One morning another engineer, who had wakened before his companion, put some milk and bread in a basin for the kitten's breakfast. When the first engineer awoke and saw the second on his knees, watching the little ones eat, he began reproaching him and accusing him of usurping the right to take care of the kittens, adding that this was nothing more than the "anarchistic principle" of violating the holy right of private property and that his actions were those of a dishonest companion. A quarrel began during which a third person stepped in and appropriated the kittens and after which the two engineers for ever remained irreconcilable enemies.

Such a demoralizing and degrading influence has the life

of the prison in the common cells ! Their inmates are often brought to a state of numb indifference to everything, to a brooding, morbid silence which smothers the mental faculties ; or they suddenly burst forth in some violent explosion and then are not capable of restraining their anger, completely forgetting their culture and the dignity of man, created in the likeness of God.

I remember one occasion on which the whole prison was poisoned through the serving of spoiled fish. Contrary to what one would naturally suppose, this really revolting accident was passed without protestation, owing to the fact that the thought-deadened colony was too enfeebled to have the stamina to protest. At another time, right in the warmth of summer, when a broken pane of glass was not immediately replaced, such a revolt developed among the prisoners that soldiers with fixed bayonets were stationed in each of the cells.

I often felt such psychologic changes within my own self. I can never forget some of these events which occurred during my sojourn in prison.

For a single example—although the door of my cell was never locked and I could consequently go, whenever I wished, into the corridor, to the kitchen for water or tea, out into the yard for tomatoes or beans from our little garden or to walk, I sometimes did not go out for days at a time. When, however, in preparation for the coming of some higher authorities, the doors of all the cells were locked, I found myself at once urged by a dozen reasons to quit the cell. As soon as I heard the key turn in the lock, I immediately ran to the door, hammered it with my fists and shouted to the keeper to open it, as I wanted to bring water and wood from the kitchen.

In such a moment of restriction I believe that the feeling of the loss of liberty is rendered markedly more acute and that there is at once awakened a violent spirit of protest in the whole organism, which subconsciously regards liberty as the highest form of happiness and as the primary, invio-

late condition of conscious human life as a part of society, State and nation.

During the days when my soul was being washed by the ebbing and flowing tides of prison sentiment, I was called one afternoon into the prison office, where I found an officer and an official from the railway, whom I knew, waiting for me. They rose when I entered and presented me with a document and a small red-leather box, announcing to me at the same time that this high decoration had been sent me from St. Petersburg at the request of General Kuropatkin in recognition of my work for the army, of course before I "became the President of the Revolutionary Government," as the officer took the precaution to explain.

At first blush I did not know exactly what to do. Then my feelings took charge, and I became angry. They valued my earlier services because I had provided the army with fuel; then, for my later services, which saved the army from anarchy and from starvation during the Revolution, they all but shot me and were now keeping me in the "stone bag!"

"I cannot accept a decoration from a Government which confers rewards on an individual with its right hand and slams prison doors behind him with its left!" I answered them, and bowed myself out of their presence.

This event for ever deprived me of the right to receive a decoration from the Tsar; yet I never regretted it and always maintained jokingly that I was in strained relations with Nicholas II, in spite of the fact that he sought to propitiate me by offering me "lodging free of rent and with full maintenance" for two years and a decoration in the bargain.

Days, weeks and months passed. In general the life of the prison was even and calm, interrupted only occasionally by some unanticipated flurry or some unusual event. From time to time, like gusts of wind, came disturbing rumours that the numerous escapes had attracted to our prison the unwelcome attention of the high authorities at St. Peters-

burg, who urged the closing of the political prison at Harbin and the scattering of its inmates among the gaols of the other towns of East Siberia. These recommendations would probably have been followed promptly, had General Horvat not used his influence to justify and secure the continuance of our institution with its more bearable conditions. However, we felt convinced that we should not be fortunate enough to remain there until the end of our terms.

Meanwhile our building became fuller than ever, largely through the prisoners that were transferred from other towns. One day there came in a group, among whom was an unusual personality, a man named Feklin. He had been a sergeant in one of the Siberian regiments, and had taken part in the Boxer Uprising in China in 1900, during which he was in the relief of Peking; and afterwards, throughout the whole of the Russo-Japanese War, was at the front, where he showed great courage, was wounded several times and won for himself all the degrees of the Cross of St. George. He belonged to the splendid tribe of the Chuvash, living between the River Kama and the Ural Mountains.

On his return from the front he fell in love with the daughter of a rich merchant, and, as the girl was also pleased with this daring, much-decorated hero, they were soon betrothed. One day, during a political manifestation, Feklin rose and made a strong speech, in which he severely criticized the handling of matters in the army. As a result of this he was arrested and, for some incomprehensible reason, was transferred about from one prison to another until he finally turned up at our hospitable door in Harbin.

Though he was not very intelligent, he talked a great deal and was evidently straightforward, so that the whole prison, even to the keepers and soldiers, soon knew that he was madly in love with his betrothed, that he was jealous and not certain that she would wait for him, even though he felt confident the court would soon set him free. Often

the poor man wept the whole night through, moaning and tossing like a child in pain.

In addition to his other trials, Feklin was plagued by a strange malady, an unknown skin disease, which he had caught during a short detention in one of the prisons of the Ural region. When he showed me his back, I was dumbfounded, for all of the skin was tattoed with a dark-blue design like acanthus leaves or like the pattern on a frozen window pane. We called the prison doctor, who had never seen or heard of such an infection. He studied Feklin for a long time, summoned other doctors from the town and finally called in a bacteriologist, who discovered that the man had been infected with some weeds, which penetrated the skin and developed quickly, causing his great suffering. When the diagnosis had been made, the nursing was easy and rapid, so that in a few short weeks Alexei Feklin lost the "botanical garden" which he had been carrying around on his back.

Finally the man's trial came, lasted two days and had a very sad ending. Sentenced to banishment north of the district of the Amur, the unfortunate man was in despair, sobbed like a child and beat his head against the wall.

"Never, never again shall I see my beloved Maria!" he cried, almost beside himself.

When only three days remained before he was to start his long, despairing journey, he was called to the warden's office. As he entered, he stopped, swayed for a second and swooned. Returning to consciousness, he saw above him the tear-stained but happy face of his betrothed, who had searched for him everywhere and had now finally discovered and joined him. On the following day the Orthodox priest came to the prison and there, before the circle of the condemned, married this Spartan daughter of the rich merchant to the man who had been deprived of his rights as a citizen and banished to the tundras. Through her marriage with Feklin she lost by her own free will her citizen rights as well and assumed with him the life of

banishment, whose full measure of denial and deprivation has never been sensed by any one that has not spent years in those north Siberian wastes.

They began their wedding journey in a prison car that was to take them eastward, then up over the Ussuri line to Habarovsk, from where, by wagon and on foot, they were to travel to the wild, solitary spot in the Far North which the tribunal of justice had selected for their home. There among the marshes and the forests which rotted in them they were to build their nest and raise their brood to the life which their foster-mother, this Lady Justice, chose for them.

Though their love was powerful and pure and could surely live down the greatest hardships, might not sickness and the all-searching cold of the north invade their poorly built shelter and extinguish their fire and with it the life of these two burning human souls? For a long time the prison could not forget Feklin and his Maria. Often, when the wind roared and blew driving snow against the prison windows, one of the prisoners would sigh and ask with evident emotion in his voice :

"Well, what about Alexei and Maria? Are they still alive?" No answer was possible to this heart-stirring question.

CHAPTER XXIII

TO THE CRIMINAL PRISONS

OUR presentiments proved to be all too correct. St. Petersburg pressed more and more insistently for the closing of the political prison in Harbin and the transfer of all those under sentence to regular prisons throughout the Far East. Foreseeing the inevitable developments, our influential friends sought to have us transferred to the fortress at Vladivostok, where a group from the local branch of our Central Committee, with the brother of General Horvat, engineer W. L. Horvat, at its head, was already confined. The correspondence between Harbin and St. Petersburg lasted for a long time, unnerving us and causing us to lose our moral grip.

It was in March of 1907, when Nowakowski and the others who had been condemned to a year's imprisonment had only a fortnight left of their terms and when, of course, they had no wish to travel in prison cars to Vladivostok or any other Siberian town to be marched through its streets to a new and more degrading gaol. One day the spindle was sprung, when we were informed that the reactionary Minister of the Interior, Durnovo, had ordered that all those who had been condemned to fortress prison be placed, until the end of their terms, in criminal prisons. He was taking this measure to make the enemies of the Government feel the whole weight of their punishment by passing through the hell of these institutions.

As this order was irrevocable, we were in despair, for we knew full well, from the stories we had heard, the inexpressible misery in which the prisoners in these gaols

existed. However, even this disagreeable turn of events had its comical side.

After Nowakowski had read the proclamation which published to the prison this disheartening news, he swore energetically and persistently and completely lost his usual good humour, walking up and down for whole hours from one corner of the cell to the other, and muttering :

“ Fool ! Fool ! ”

“ Who is a fool ? ” I finally asked him.

“ I am,” he answered and stopped right in front of me, as I looked at him in astonishment. “ I am,” he repeated with emphasis and conviction, “ because it was I myself who built the criminal prison over in Pristan and now I am to be locked up in it ! Is it not the irony of Fate, a joke of life ? ” He spat energetically and again took up his tramp across the cell, snorting and muttering. I had a good laugh at his expense. Life could really not have played a sorer practical joke on this builder of the prison.

However, Nowakowski was spared the actual fulfilment of this bit of grim humour, owing to the fact that the preparations for the transfer of the political prisoners consumed so much time that the end of the term of Nowakowski and some of the others came before these were completed, so that on March 23rd, 1907, this little group was set free to go back into the world—and face the new persecutions by the Tsar’s officials and gendarmes which awaited them.

I was left quite alone in my cell. At first I missed the bent figure of the grey-haired, silent Nowakowski. Longing often gnawed at my mind and heart, but soon everything was engulfed in a strange, dull indifference to all that was happening in my moral and physical spheres. It was just as though I had for some time been effaced from life, as though I had been in a lethargy and were at intervals coming back to consciousness, only to fall again into a sleep still more profound and heavy, unmarked by dreams or by any remembrance of a former existence. Such an experience is only normal in the life of a prisoner and explains why

men who have been sentenced to long terms do not, for the most part, begin to work of their own will, for they instinctively realize that the end of the period of their exclusion from the life of the State and of society is still so far away that the one single thought is simply to wait for it to come and there is no reason to begin to prepare for it through work. This is the most demoralizing influence of the prison, since a man after this lethargy rarely knows how, when he is set free, to return to normal life. Moreover, he must inevitably go through a period of despondency, strongly set with doubt and with hate, not only the hatred for the authorities who condemned him but also that for society, which looks with silence and indifference upon the moral tortures of the inmates of its prisons.

I really do not know which suffers the more in a Russian prison, the simple man or the cultured one. While the first may develop a degenerating laziness and hate, in the second there may readily appear more dangerous symptoms, which tend to destroy his whole spiritual structure. I have specially in mind that despondency—impossible to formulate in words—as to the real value of life and work in a time when there is so much legal injustice in the depriving of man of liberty and of the natural conditions of normal life, that is, of the possibility of expressing human sentiments, thoughts and actions. After my first fourteen months of imprisonment under what might be called unusually favourable conditions, I observed these changes in myself and, for a long time after I was finally out of the “stone bag,” I could not muster the necessary strength to correct these deformities.

From the course of my tale the reader will realize that I know the prison through and through, that I have had the opportunity to look into the depths of the souls of its miserable and very unhappy population and that I have, consequently, the right to give expression to my one outstanding thought regarding it.

First, let us admit at once that modern society is so organized that it cannot exist without eliminating from its life certain personalities, which are too theoretically expansive to conform to its institutions as they stand and are, therefore, dangerous to it ; but do not let us, through the law, make of them monsters breathing ruin and hate for ever after. Give them the most normal conditions of life, fill their monotonous days with work, study and talks with men who are wise and full of understanding ; try to wake in their hearts healthful remorse, shame and disgust for their former actions ; heal them and make them over morally, not only with words and prison regulations, but with a constructively beneficial regime for their enforced life behind the prison bars. Remember this in the name of Love and Justice ; remember it for the sake of your own security, keeping before you the terrible example of Russia, where, in this land of prisons, banishment and executioners, whole rivers of innocent and valuable blood have been shed during these past seven years through the opportunities given to the former inhabitants of the "stone bags" to revenge themselves upon the men guilty of their torture—and upon the innocent, who, in silence, allowed the crime of the others to pass unchallenged.

In the early days of April, when I had still six months of imprisonment ahead of me, one morning at about seven o'clock our few possessions were loaded on a big, flat wagon and we were herded into the crude "Black Marias" of Russia and taken over to the criminal prison in the commercial quarter of Harbin.

This immense building of red brick, with barred windows, stood enclosed by a high wall, at whose corners soldiers in protruding, round turrets swept the sides of the square. Other armed guards were posted at the entrance and were doing sentinel duty all around the base of the wall. When the skeleton iron door closed with a dull noise and a rattle behind us, a crushing presentiment, an indescribable longing fastened itself upon our hearts.

Some guards, armed with revolvers and swords, were stationed about the prison yard, where a group of prisoners were carrying big buckets filled with dishwater. In an exercise cage, which had been built in the centre of the yard, a prisoner was shuffling up and down with a heavy, swaying tread, induced by the irons on his feet, which clanked at every movement.

From a side wing of the building a line of women prisoners under the care of a matron were just coming out. They were carrying soiled linen and were evidently going to the wash-room. One of them spoke to me. She was no longer young, rather tall and had a thin, gloomy face, out of which gleamed threateningly stern, black eyes. As she passed near me, she bent toward me and whispered :

" You want, perhaps, to die ? I have a sure poison, made of herbs. A little of it put in your tea will be sufficient."

I was silent and experienced a feeling of great depression.

" When you want it, please remember my name. I am called ' Daria the Black.' . . . It is a good, strong herb."

The matron called sharply at her for lingering, and she went on.

We spent a long time in the yard, while our belongings, documents and photographs were being registered in the Commandant's office. From the principal building quite a number of prisoners came out to walk in the yard and, little heeding the shouts and cuffings of the keepers, crowded round us with a score of questions.

" Ah-h-h ! " drawled one of them, a rather short man with broad shoulders and hands that reached down to his knees. " Citizens—the dear *intelligentsia* ! Ah-ha ! You put us in your prisons, because sometimes we pinch you a little. But I see that now you are beginning to destroy yourselves. This is well, Citizens ! "

As he said this, he poked me in the side with his fist, while the others, with the same aggravating familiarity, began to push my companions about and to jest them

roughly. I looked at the man for a moment. He had a vicious, colourless face, oblique eyes and ears like those of a bat.

"What is your name?" I asked him.

"The one they gave me at my birth," he answered with a laugh, and, putting his arm around my neck, added: "Well, comrade, don't prance!"

"Leave me in peace, or it will be the worse for you," I returned calmly but very definitely. "I don't like familiarity or stupid jokes."

"And what difference is it to me that you don't like this?" he replied with a good deal of disdain, at the same time trying to take hold of my neck again.

"Then take that," and, with a strong lunge on the jaw, I sent him over clean. His group immediately retreated, muttering:

"Eh! this is a bad bird."

My over-intimate acquaintance picked himself up rather leisurely and went off without saying a word for a walk in the cage.

"That is Mironoff," explained one of the keepers, who came up to me. "You struck him hard and he will now respect you."

An hour later in my cell, which had only a single small window near the ceiling and was but four paces in length, I began walking up and down and reflecting on the characteristic way the prison had met me—with poison and fight.

"Here one must either give up and flee from life or fight with his own strength, in order to have anything approaching a possible existence," I wrote in my notebook as my first observation on the criminal prison.

Although to me now the memories and impressions from the prisons at Harbin, Vladivostok, Nikolsk, Nikolaievsk and Habarovsk form one immense black and gloomy background of a life crushingly monotonous through its continual torture, there pass across the foreground of this great

canvas of memory, like flashes of bright and dazzling lightning, unusual figures, events fraught with strength and impulse, unhappy souls, sometimes beautiful in their tortures and longings and, at others, unbelievably powerful in their actions.

Unknown and unknowable Fate threw me into these "stone bags" filled with human dust; into this strange world full of contradictions, with a life revolving ever within the limits of the four walls surrounding the criminal prisons of Russia; into these packs of pariahs, these victims of the stupid Russian disregard and cruelty.

This life does not take its character from any incidence of locality or from the personality of the authorities; it is the result of the collective soul of the Russian nation. Therefore, I shall describe it as though I had seen it and lived it in a single place, though I repeat again, that there may be no misunderstanding, that my record is made up of the events, impressions and experiences in the several prisons to which I was transferred before the expiration of my term. Everywhere they were tied together with the one ever-present thread of tragedy in these molecules of human dust,—a tragedy stormy and fascinating, though at times bright withal.

PART III
IN HUMAN DUST

CHAPTER XXIV

BEYOND THE PALE

AS we had been condemned to "fortress prison," in each of the places to which we were transferred we had the very gratifying distinction granted us of being given individual cells. Everywhere these were quite alike, damp and contaminated little dens with thick walls, strong iron doors, a small barred window near the ceiling, a bed, a chair, a table and a box for our things.

As we political prisoners were always kept apart in one special wing of the principal building, we were treated on quite a different basis from the ordinary inmates—the doors of our cells were not locked, and a criminal prisoner was told off to clean our rooms, boots and clothes, as well as to cook our food, which was of a better quality than the ordinary prison fare and for which we paid in the prison office with the money sent us from our homes.

In every prison where I was kept for any length of time I set to work along two main lines: first I cleaned and put everything in my cell in order as best I could, then I planted beds of vegetables and flowers. In the Harbin prison I discovered a small supply of cement left in a drum in the store-room and with this made a fairly large concrete basin, which I placed in that part of the prison yard given over to our exercise. When it was set, I filled it with water and put in my artificial pond some *Cladophoræ* and other water-plants, given me by the wife of one of the keepers; and, after these were well established, I added some crustaceans and two little tortoises. This improvised aquarium gave us men, deprived of our freedom, many delightful hours of

watching and feeding the fish and the turtles, which grew so accustomed to us that they would take food from our hands.

My second activity was teaching. From the authorities I secured permission to visit the large common cells, where there were sometimes as many as two hundred prisoners quartered in the one room. Here I had long talks and discussions on all sorts of subjects, in order to distract the men from brooding over the stern realities of their position and to put into their hearts and minds the seeds of clean and wholesome thoughts. I remember how I frequently told the stories of some of the great benefactors of mankind to the inmates of Cell No. 1, where one hundred and ten of the worst of criminals, condemned to life sentences in irons, surrounded and listened to me, and how the impressions made by my anecdotes seemed to me quite the same as those on normal men, who look upon a prison as something entirely foreign and far removed from them.

The prisoners came to like and respect me, as they knew that I would not allow an abuse of authority or an unwarranted action to go without protest, and that, if one of the prisoners sought to take liberties with me, I knew how to answer him, just as I had answered Mironoff during the first hour after our arrival. In view of these facts I was chosen at Harbin, and in some of the other prisons, to be the *starosta*, or headman, of the prisoners. A *starosta* occupies a position unofficially recognized by the prison as well as by the judicial authorities, is respected and listened to by the prisoners and acts as a mediator between them and the wardens or superintendent, besides being the accepted judge in the internal affairs of the institution.

After I had settled down in the new prison, I again began to work systematically, to read and to write a great deal and also continued the notes from which I have drawn most of the material for this book. To give variety and diversion I wrote some rather fantastic novels, which lifted me from the sombre surroundings of my prison life and

transported me to the unknown and little-travelled lands of my imagination. In addition to these occupations I filled my time with walks in the improvised garden, with talks and lectures for the prisoners and with gymnastics.

Through the window of my cell I could hear the conversation of the prisoners in two of the common rooms on the second floor. Drawn by the character of their unguarded utterances, I could not resist going into these rooms and very soon had, as a consequence, the whole life of the prison in the hollow of my hand, as it were. I learned the minutest details of it ; I saw the bared souls of the men held between its walls ; I understood and shared in their misery, despair, hopes and joy ; I tried to help them, to console them, to build up hope within them, to reach and work upon their consciences, as hard as flint, and to lead them gradually into another way of life.

The older prisoners often laughed at me, though in general they liked me and showed evident pleasure in talking and discussing with me. Quite frequently they gave me presents, which were for the most part figures or whole scenes from the prison life cleverly made up of bread—men in irons, dragging sacks filled with coal or with stones, fugitives in the forest near a fire with a kettle hanging over it, subjects which awoke and strongly stirred the artistic fantasies of the prisoners. Sometimes I received other presents, such as a sharp, thin knife, a saw for cutting through the iron bars, a little bottle of poison, a watchchain made of hair, etc. I had a whole museum of these gifts in my cell.

One evening about ten o'clock, when I was sitting in my cell writing, I perceived rather than heard that somebody was carefully and noiselessly opening my door and then realized that a shadow was standing behind me. He had entered so deftly and quietly that I did not even turn my head, thinking at the time that I must have been mistaken. However, after a moment I sensed the breathing of a man and looked behind me, to find that Mironoff was standing

there and was gazing at me from his oblique eyes with a look that clearly betokened an unpronounced request.

"What do you want?" I asked him, as I rose to be ready for any emergency.

"They have assigned me to the work of servant in the political division. I saw that you were not asleep and came in. You must be angry with me for having acted so badly when you came here. Please pardon me."

"No, I am not angry with you. I forgot all that some time ago."

"Thank you!" he exclaimed. "May I ask you something?"

"Certainly. What is it?"

"Allow me to remain in your cell while you are at work."

"But why?" I asked, somewhat astonished.

Mironoff gave a sigh and began whispering, as he pointed to that part of the prison which could be seen out through my little window.

"You don't know that up there, where we live, it is hell, real hell! It is already six years since I entered that terrible den. Here in your cell I feel something different, another air, another appearance of the walls, something else which does not exist there. Now I shall sleep in the corridor and I beg that you allow me to remain in your cell, when you work. I shall be your servant for two weeks and I want to rest from those surroundings up there, to breathe freely and gain some more strength to continue to live."

During the whole night I talked with Mironoff and heard from him how he had formerly been a sailor on a merchant vessel, how he had committed several terrible and awful crimes, how he escaped more than once from his prisons, how he had been caught and flogged and how he had finally been condemned as an habitual criminal to prison for life, which in the language of the prison is referred to as "forever." With it all he had been a very unfortunate man, for no little part of his difficulties had been due to unhappy combinations of circumstances.

After this first visit it became the regular custom each evening for Mironoff to come to my cell and sit quietly on my box, mending clothes or boots and pondering over matters which brought alternating smiles and frowns to his hardened prison face. Though I always continued with my reading or writing, I regarded it as my duty to have a little talk each day with my guest. If Mironoff learned something from me, I also profited from my acquaintance with him.

First of all he taught me the prison "wireless telegraphy," which enabled the men to send words or whole sentences by knocking on the walls or on the pipes of the heating system, using a telegraphic alphabet which is changed in each prison to safeguard the secrecy of the correspondence. The mastering of this code enabled me to understand and study a number of dramas and love affairs of the prison and, when Mironoff was no longer my servant, to pick up his signals and talk with him.

I also learned from Mironoff the *lingua franca* of the prisons and came to know the keeper as the "*ment*," the prison as "*kiecha*" ("*kiecha*" means prison, and "*kiechka*" is the diminutive form. Hence "*kiechku*" as used in the expression in line 5 on the following page), a knife as a "pen," a lodging as a "*haza*," a revolver as a "*shpayer*," a poison as "milk," a murder as "wet," to kill as "to sew," to escape as "to fly," a false passport as "the face," and many more like these, which I treasured in my mind and in my notebook.

I liked one expression which came to the prisons from the Volga, at the time when numerous bands of river pirates dominated this great highway to the whole country. These men used to rob and kill the merchants who were bringing their precious Eastern wares from Persia and the Caucasus, and they even mustered strength enough to fight the detachments of the regular army that were sent against them from Moscow. The national literature idealized the leader of these brigands, one Stenka (the diminutive of Stephen)

Razin, making of him a hero, who was struggling for the release of the peasants from the slavery to their landlords.

The expression used by Stenka Razin, when he was on the point of undertaking some risky expedition, was :

"*Saryn da na kiechku!*" The influence of both the Tartar and Kalmuck language is phonetically perceptible in the phrase and, as a matter of fact, both have contributed to it. This sentence has two different meanings: for the robbers, "Kill and go to prison"; for prisoners, "Break the bars and flee from prison." After my instruction by Mironoff, I knew, whenever I heard this phrase, that an attempt to escape was in preparation.

Singing holds an important place in prison life. Many types of songs are current, some gay, some sad, and they are rendered both as simple airs or with frequently well-combined and impressive part singing. The prisoners put into these songs their whole soul and they value highly any among them who has unusual talent. I found that the most popular among these prison songs was the one which began :

Though the sun ever mounts and descends the blue sky,
The dank cell of my prison stays dark . . .

The songs of the prisons really merit a special, closely analytical study, for in them one can find echoes of all the historical periods of Russia, the *motifs* from the folksongs of the many peoples which have combined to make up the Russian Empire, the influences of the legends of various Mongolian tribes and, especially, distinct traces of the vivacious, sentimental gipsy music. It is a crushingly significant fact that the prisoners never sing religious or pious songs.

"We are cursed," they say. "God will not heed our prayers."

These words are terribly tragic, the more so since every prisoner individually and secretly lifts his eyes to Heaven, fervently though almost hopelessly, with longing and

despair feeling that from there only can come relief and aid.

With my work and in these first studies of the prison life my days passed rather quickly. I felt distinctly that beyond the walls of my individual cell there simmered and boiled quite a different life, this "hell" of which Mironoff had spoken; yet I could not at the outset penetrate into all its details and its hidden recesses. Time and propitious conditions were necessary for this. However, the clamour which always reigned in the main building and in the yard, the clanking of irons, the terrible oaths of the keepers and the prisoners,—this accumulated weight of the ceaseless, depressing noise of the life of barricaded men finally searched out my every nerve and angered, excited and fatigued me. At times I felt wrath or hate born of it all and even despair, which imposed on me the keenest torture.

CHAPTER XXV

UNCONDEMNED PRISON COMPANIONS

ONCE, when I was labouring under the irritating influence of such a period of depression, I happened to be walking up and down near our beds of cucumbers and tomatoes. As I made out something moving among the leaves, I began to search for the cause and found a young sparrow with an injured wing. I had, naturally, no idea whence he came nor how he had received his injury, but in my own condition of restricted movement, I felt a particularly keen sympathy for him, took him to my cell and washed and dressed his wound. After I had bound his wing to his body with a bandage, I placed him on the window sill, where my bit of gauze that had been stretched to keep out the flies, this veritable plague of Harbin, was an all-sufficient prison wall for him. Then I made him a nest in a little box, put water and food near it and went away. When I returned, I was as happy as a boy at seeing that he had been pecking at the bread, and I felt quite sure that he would recover, though I had much anxiety as to his ability to fly again.

After some days my little cell-mate became quite tame, taking his food readily from my hand and making known, with piercing little shrieks, his wish to be moved from the window to the table. Several days later I decided to take off the dressing. As soon as the little fellow was relieved of his bandages, he began a noisy demonstration of his joy, jumping into the air, fluttering his wings and trying to fly. On the first day he made no success of it

but on the second he managed to flutter from the window to my table, overturning my inkstand in a particularly bad landing he made. From this moment on he became more and more adept and was soon making lively rounds close to the ceiling and filling the cell with his vivacity and chirping.

I was greatly relieved by the companionship of my fellow-prisoner and was really deeply impressed by the manner in which he showed his keen sensibility to my state of mind. I had frequent proofs of it. When I was in a peaceful, calm mood, he acted as though he were almost mad, lighted on my shoulder or my head, pecked me mischievously or hopped about on my paper. When, as was so often the case, I was sad and dull, the bird would sit silent and motionless on the window sill, looking at me. Then, however, only a glance and a smile or a chirp to him was sufficient to rouse him and bring him tumbling over to my table, to jump and chirp about in his very evident endeavour to cheer me up. At dawn he would waken me with flying about the cell or by lighting on my face and peeping at me, insistent that I should get up to provide him with his breakfast and fresh water for his bath.

He was veritably a wise little creature, for he knew men and understood them, as he looked into their souls with his black, beady eyes. He liked the Commandant of the Prison, who came for an inspecting round each week. The moment he entered, the bird gave him a greeting of unmistakable friendliness, lighted on the table and, hopping about in a most amusing manner, would cautiously manœuvre for a good position near the gallooned sleeve of the visitor. But when the Prosecutor came, he acted quite differently, usually hiding in his nest and keeping entirely silent. If the Prosecutor remained for a longer time in the cell, the bird would sometimes perch on the window sill, spread his wings and squeak abuses in common, hysterical tones. Once the door had closed behind the

unwelcome guest, my winged friend would immediately start flying about joyfully and showing his evident pleasure.

When I made sure that the sparrow was quite well and strong, I decided to set him free, to send him back as a messenger, as it were, to that world of liberty which was so near in linear feet but so immeasurably distant in fact from those of us who could not accompany him. I took him out into the yard, where nearly the whole prison had assembled to bid him God-speed. As I lifted my hand from his wings, he arose like an unhooded falcon in quest of his quarry and shot up toward the trees just outside the prison wall. Though he never came back, I was not angry with him, for I understood that liberty, to which he was restored, was the highest right and greatest treasure of living beings and that, with it and its ramifications, any creature might be all-engrossed.

Remaining as long as I did in prison, I found and developed many interesting and gratifying friendships among animals. In the number of these friends I counted cats, dogs, rats, tortoises, fish, a hen and—a spider. Through these acquaintances in the animal kingdom I learned, first of all, that animals are tamed very readily, but that they must be given to know what man wants of them and that he will give them what they desire. Also I came to feel sure that animals have a sixth sense, telepathic, very acute and something akin to the "side line" of the fish. By its medium they sense and understand the psychology of other living beings around them, not even excepting spiritually complicated man.

Rats, for instance, these big grey rodents, so bold, greedy and cautious, are quickly tamed and can be moulded into friends. However, to reveal the condemning truth, they are entirely actuated by selfish motives; for they give thought to their own welfare only and for this will make diplomatic agreements with man. In my cell there was a nest of these rodents, and, as I do not like such

fellow-lodgers, I was planning to stop up the hole, when I observed that the colony consisted of only a mother and five little ones. It became evident that the mother was a widow, since I never saw a second grown one which could be regarded as the husband, and the old rat had, according to my way of thinking, such a sad and depressed look as well became a widow.

Never more than six grey figures glided through the darkness of my cell. One evening when all of them came out of the hole together, I tried an experiment by stamping sharply and watched them scuttle back under the floor. After a moment the old one poked her nose out and emerged cautiously. Gradually she moved farther from the hole and then gave a low call, which brought two little heads above the horizon. When I stamped again, they disappeared, the widow hiding this time behind my box. Once more, when she satisfied herself that quiet reigned, she gave another signal that brought the little ones out, only to be driven back by my repetition of the threatening noise. After this warning, the old one did not appear, but I had the feeling that she was somewhere watching me and trying to make out my wishes. Once there seemed no other development immediately ahead, I threw a bit of sugar on the floor. In an instant the mother appeared from somewhere, snatched it up and disappeared with it in the hole. When she returned immediately, I tossed her a second piece and in this way contributed six consecutive lumps to her larder, one for herself and one for each of her children. From that evening forth I acted thus as her commissary agent twice each day and derived quite unexpected results from my services. The young ones never came out at all, only the widow presenting herself each morning and evening for their rations. At other times I never saw her. If, when she came for supplies, I did not at once notice her, she would scramble up on my box, rise up on her hind-legs and say something to me in low, unobtrusive tones. Then, when I had doled

out to her the regulation six pieces of bread, sugar or ham, she immediately carried them off piece by piece into her hole and disappeared for another twelve hours.

One evening the whole family came out again, with the widow leading them and gazing for a moment very knowingly at me, as though she seemed to be saying :

“ You understand, don't you ? ”

The children followed her very quietly and in regular military order. The procession crossed the cell and disappeared into the corridor through a crack under the door. A little later they returned, paraded before me and disappeared in their dugout. From that day forth this review occurred each evening and led me to observe that they went down the corridor to the wash-room in search of water. Evidently the mother was no longer nursing the little ones, so that her offspring had to go for a drink.

Some weeks later the family disappeared without ever returning, and the hole was left empty. I took it for granted that, with the children growing up, the mother had to take them to a centre of more culture than the criminal prison to give to the young rats the benefits of better training and education.

In her relations with me I saw plainly the selfish characteristics of the widow in the fact that she never came to see me save in connection with her own material affairs. She understood that I did not want her family under my feet, on my bed and in my box and not only acquiesced in this, but, as I paid her well, made an agreement with me, which she kept until the day of her departure. However, I must explain that she gave ample evidence of understanding my moods, for in the time of my moral depression she carried away her food rapidly and noiselessly, as though she had no wish to intrude herself into my thoughts. On the other hand, when I was in a brighter mood, she acted very differently, squeaking joyfully and even shaking and tossing the morsels I gave

to her, at the same time jumping about in a far from graceful but very amusing manner.

While mentioning my animal friends, I cannot refrain from including a word about a sorcerer, who entered my cell and took up his abode therein. This was a large, dark-yellow spider with a black cross on its back. I had no idea how it came in, thinking that I had perhaps brought it on my clothes from somewhere among my tomato vines. Once inside, it had stretched its web in a corner of the window and lay in ambush for its game. As I saw that it was destined to perish from hunger, owing to the fact that my gauze allowed no flies to enter, and learning from other prisoners that a spider is a fine companion in a cell, I caught flies for it in the yard and threw them into its web, until I was afraid it would burst from over-feeding and want of the customary exercise of its primitive ancestors, who had to roam the wood for their subsistence.

It was an extraordinary creature. I knew by its conduct one or two days in advance whether we were to have fair weather, storm or rain, indicated by the position which my barometer assumed in the middle of its web. Before a coming storm it held tightly to the web with all its feet or even bound itself to it with extra threads; before rain it rolled itself into a ball in one corner of the web and gathered all its legs up underneath its body; while, when dry, hot weather was approaching, it spread its legs as widely as it could, holding on with only two, or even at times with only one of them. I used to wonder whether the spider had rheumatism or had suffered some accident like mine in Udzimi, as I was also very sensitive to all changes in the weather.

But what was more incredible and strange for me was the conduct of my spider when I was in low spirits or filled with longing to be away. Whereas it was usually quite indifferent to me, at such times it showed definite signs of nervous agitation, running across its web, as if

to attract my attention, and, when it found this of no avail, even making the web sway back and forth and swinging from it.

One day I sat near the table in a brown study, pressing my head between my hands. Sad thoughts filled my mind, and I was far away from the prison walls, even far away from Asia. Suddenly I felt as though some one were carefully observing me, but I looked round and saw nobody. Glancing about for the spider, I could not find it anywhere. It was neither on its web nor in the window. As this was its first disappearance since it had taken up lodgings with me, I made a search of the walls and room and finally located it. It was right there on the table before me, having let itself down from the ceiling by its self-made aerial route and landed on a clean sheet of white paper that lay among my books. Its two forelegs were raised toward me, and I felt that it was scrutinizing me with its mysterious eyes. It sat in motionless concentration and above it, reaching up to the ceiling, intermittently glittered the silken strand down which it came. Its stern look and upraised feelers reminded me of an ill-tempered teacher scolding a pupil and involuntarily made me laugh outright at the changed being. At this turn of affairs my preceptor, clumsily managing its heavy body, backed away a few steps and transformed itself into the most agile of acrobats, as it reascended its silken path. In a few minutes it was back in the middle of its net, quite evidently calm and pleased, and foretold fair weather. I at once went out and caught it some flies as a reward for diverting me from my sad and burdening thoughts. Apparently wishing to prove that it was well bred and not of a greedy turn of mind, it did not touch any of them for quite a time.

Impressions and observations of this character seem to me now, as I ponder over them, peculiar and almost limited to individuals who live for long months, or even years, quite outside the bournes of ordinary life. There

in this desert region, every small thing attracts and holds the attention of the solitary individual, who understands and feels it all through his over-sensitized soul, nerves and mind and who is distracted by nothing, troubled by nothing and fired by nothing.

CHAPTER XXVI

“SARYN DA NA KIECHKU”

THE prison is asleep. A light, easily roused slumber has gradually drawn its quieting mantle over the bodies stretched out on wooden beds or benches and covered with spotted blankets or simply the ordinary grey cloaks of the prisoners. No noises of scraping bolts and rattling locks are heard; only the loud tread of the guard on duty in the corridor breaks the unusual silence. At times the measured reports of his steps die down and his dimming outline disappears in the darkness, to emerge again a few moments later in the lighted end of the long corridor, behind whose grated and barred doors the unhappy inmates sleep or ponder how they may escape. For the nonce the oaths and curses invented by the prisoners, the scoldings of the keepers and the continuous clankings of the irons have ceased.

Cell No. 1, opposite my little window, is also silent, held in the dim thrall of a small lamp that gives forth a cloud of odours but very little light. In the corner near the door there stands a big iron bucket, the *parasha*, the worst torture of the criminal prison. On the wooden benches along the walls are sleeping about one hundred of the most important members of the colony of condemned, for these are the so-called “Ivans” or old, hardened habitual criminals, men who for years have been intimately acquainted with all the prisons of Russia, with the stupefying cold of the Siberian winters, with the *katorga* or penal colony of enforced hard labour, with Zerentoui, Akatoui and Onor.

Cell No. 1 had this night gone late to rest, for long after midnight their card-playing continued in spite of the threatening calls of the guards. One among them, Basil Drujenin, did not sleep. He lay on his back with his hands under his head and stared out of his wide-open eyes at the circle of yellow light which the lamp threw on the dirty ceiling. He was pondering stubbornly over something, and at times his eyes brightened as some wave of hope swept through his dreams. Finally, as an idea struck him, he suddenly sat up and loosed the noisy spirits that seemed always to be hiding in his irons. From the benches around him came the mutterings of his dreaming mates, indistinct words, generally meaningless but sometimes charged with terrible coherency.

Basil sat for a long time listening and waiting. Finally, before dawn, there travelled along the bricks of the wall an indistinct sound, that told it had come through winding and circuitous ways. It was repeated a second time and Drujenin smiled. He knew and recognized the signal of his friend, Elia Lapin, who was living out a punishment in irons in a subterranean cell. Thrice Basil struck the wall with his own irons to apprise his friend that he was listening. Then he heard more distinctly the combination of raps so well known to every prisoner—one loud stroke, five low ones and again two heavy blows, which was the regular code form of *Saryn da na kiechku*.

Drujenin smiled joyfully and, stretching himself across his bed, answered with one sharp knock on the wall. Again silence ruled, for the prisoner, after the last clanking of his irons as he turned on his side, seemed to have fallen asleep.

In the east the skies soon reddened, for a new day, a prison day, was once more beginning. The guard rang a bell, swung near the stairway, and shouted:

"Take out the *parashas*! Quick!"

Up from the benches rose those among the men who had not lost all sense of obedience to commands or who,

perhaps, were morally weaker in their resistance of other wills upon their own, and took out the awful iron buckets. At the same time activity began in the kitchen, where the prisoners on duty started rattling the copper and tin kettles, preparing water for tea or setting the *balanda*, or soup, to cook. Such a hubbub was set up by this rattling of the kettles, the chopping of the meat, the laughter, shouts and ever-present oaths, that no one could expect or hope for sleep. Throughout the prison the men rose, stretched and washed, accompanying it all with a ceaseless stream of monstrous oaths. No one muttered a prayer; no one made the sign of the Holy Cross.

As Drujenin rose, he came to the middle of the room with his clanking irons and there stopped to attach them by a leather thong to his belt. He was a man of thirty years, short but strong and graceful; not what one would call good-looking but having bold, hazel eyes, which seemed never to wink and thus not only gave to his face a dreamy character but an impression of the watchfulness of a wild animal.

After a few moments the guard opened the door, so that the prisoners could go down to the kitchen for their tea and bread. Returning with the hot beverage and lumps of the prison black bread, the men ate and drank in silence, hid their cups as they finished and then split up into little groups. The greater part of them began playing cards, quarrelling and even fighting among themselves over the game; others read newspapers or well-thumbed books; while a few wrote letters to people who possibly no longer existed or who, perhaps, lived only in their imaginations. Generally these were love-letters. Three Georgians sat apart by themselves and in low voices exchanged short sentences, full of sadness and longing.

"In the Caucasus it must be like a real paradise now," said one of them.

"Everything is in white and pink bloom. Plum and cherry trees make lovely dots all over the green hillside," the second one added.

"In the evening when the sun is setting, everything is silent, so silent. . . . The herds wind back to the *aouls*," came from a third, as, with a sigh, he pressed his head between his hands.

"Don't sigh so, you folks from the Caucasus!" one of the other prisoners called over to them. "Without your sighs one dies from longing here. To the devil with you!"

The Georgians only raised their heads, looking like birds of prey.

In the farthest corner of the room a quarrel began over a game in which one of the players had cheated. During the inevitable struggle that followed, knives were bared, and soon the guards took away two wounded men to the hospital. But the affair was soon forgotten and only tranquillity seemed ever to have ruled in the place, as an old white-haired man and a boy, who could not have been over fourteen years of age, sat on a window sill, feeding the pigeons that lighted without fear upon their hands and shoulders.

Under the depressing burden of a day, aimless but full of noise, which was everywhere perceptible, all of the prisoners became more and more sad and silent. Only the old experienced Ivans did not lose their temper. These hardened old philosophers were always ready to give their lives for even a few days of liberty and they lived ever buoyed by the hope of this fleeting joy, which they knew they could gain only through their own strength, courage and inventive faculties. To attain this supreme aim the Ivans always had hidden away in some hole known only to themselves an acid to soften brick and mortar, pyroxylin for blowing out a wall, poison, a saw and a knife. Carelessly and easily they risked their lives and quite as readily took those of others, especially

if the life in question was that of a *ment* (keeper) or a "retriever" (traitor).

Drujenin, lost in thought and apparently oblivious to the life around him, paced up and down the room. In a little while every one turned out for a walk, so that the crowd filled the exercise enclosure in the yard, which was surrounded by the high picket fence that made a cage of it. The men began to run about, to race one another, to toss a ball they had made out of rags and to play at checkers or cards. Drujenin, as he walked about, approached one of the older Ivans and exchanged a few words with him. Then he went off and stood in a corner of the cage, evidently waiting for some one.

In a few moments Elia Lapin came out and entered the enclosure. He carried on his wrists and ankles the heaviest of irons, those used in punishment, while on his whitish-grey face he wore an expression of malignancy and fatigue, which was accentuated by the contrast of the threatening, sharp eyes that looked out from under heavy brows. He walked with feet far apart in a rolling gait, dragging his burdened ankles with a strain that alternately bent and straightened his great, strong back. Without speaking to any one else, he went straight to Drujenin and began to whisper :

" You have the ' hair ' (saw) ? "

" Yes."

" That is good, for the bars in the wash-room window have got to be cut. You understand ? "

Drujenin gave a nod of his head and, leaving his companion, mixed with the other prisoners but all the time he was keeping his eye on the guard and, the moment he was sure the man was not watching, he sidled up to one of the palings in the fence, leaned lazily against it and began rubbing it with something. After a moment he felt a sharp scratch on his finger, rolled over closer to the fence to cover his movements and took from the disclosed slit in the side of the bar a long thin hack-saw blade.

Having hidden it inside his blouse, he turned away and began walking leisurely up and down, whistling unconcernedly as he went. Then, after a turn or two, he came up to the fence dividing the cage of the criminals from the yard of the political prisoners and spoke to me in a low voice:

"Comrade, if you hear anything to-night, do not be disturbed, and say nothing to anyone."

"*Saryn da na kiechku?*" He nodded in affirmation and turned away.

Drujenin was one of those ordinary men of whom the Russian system often made criminals. He had been a simple peasant, following the occupation of a Siberian hunter. Once, when he was returning from one of his regular expeditions into the woods, he was arrested by the police and accused of having taken part in an attack upon a mail courier. Although there was no evidence against him except the bare fact that he was simply found tramping along the road where the attack was made and was carrying his rifle, the examining magistrate kept him in prison for the whole period of the investigation. After a year of hopeless waiting without seeing the case come to final trial, Drujenin escaped and, during the pursuit, wounded two soldiers, was recaptured and then incarcerated on the charge of two crimes.

When I first made Drujenin's acquaintance, he had already spent five years in prison. From time to time despair overpowered him and, under the scourge of it, he attacked the guards like an infuriated beast, only to pay the inevitable penalty of a period in irons. Yet, in spite of these temporary fits of wild rage, the prison authorities were fond of Drujenin, for he was at other times polite and reserved. The Commandant of the Prison even went so far as to admit to me one day that he was sure the man was undergoing an unjust imprisonment as the victim of a judicial error.

Following a hot day, as noisy as usual, the twilight

finally came to bring us the cool of evening, though this had to be offset by the snelling lamps in the rooms. After supper we suddenly heard a shrill whistle, protracted and strong.

"That is Lapin," whispered one of the Ivans, as he winked knowingly at his companion.

"We must be ready," added a second one; and, going to the door, he shouted in the corridor: "Music and the theatre!"

As though by military command, singing started in all the cells, followed by dances with great stamping of boots and all sorts of extraordinary noises in accompaniment. This was the "music," and, when the guards sought to restore quiet among the prisoners, "the theatre" began, that is, rows, quarrels, requests for the prison *starosta* and for the Commandant of the Prison, who "persecutes the prisoners" and makes their lot unnecessarily hard by denying them the innocent pleasure of dancing and song. These rows and discussions kept the whole upper storey of the prison in a constant turmoil until ten o'clock.

In the meantime Drujenin took no part in the disturbances, simply looking on with a disdainful smile at all this useless hubbub. When it had quieted down, he approached the Commandant of the Prison and said meekly:

"Sir Chief, please relieve me of my irons. See how they have chafed and wounded my wrists and ankles! I shall never again deserve punishment at your hands."

The Commandant, having remarked the conduct of Drujenin during the row and thinking by this bit of diplomacy to allay the excitement running through the whole prison, ordered him to the smithy to have his irons taken off. In a little while the happy man returned without his chains and with sparkling eyes that told of his relief.

As two of the prisoners were about to go to the wash-room for the *parasha*, Drujenin said to one of them:

"You remain here. Do you understand? I shall do it for you."

As he arrived with the second prisoner in the wash-room, he whispered something to the men who were already there from the other cells, at which they all began washing the buckets with a great noise and such scuffling or horse-play among the receptacles that they kept up a continuous racket. During this time Drujenin cut the light bars over the wash-room window. When he had finished his task, he jumped up on the sill, and looked carefully around to see whether there was any one about before he dropped to the ground. Just below the window there was an old, long-unused well, into which the mains of the heating system came together from conduits that led to the several buildings.

The man who had helped Drujenin replaced the window-bars in such a way that they would not be noticed except after close inspection, and, after a few moments, all the men returned with the *parashas* to their different rooms. As the roll-call of the prisoners always took place during the supper hour, the disappearance of Drujenin could only be discovered in the morning. The precaution was taken by his cell-mates to have a dummy, made of his clothes, lying on his boards covered with a blanket.

Once Drujenin had alighted on the ground, he carefully removed the rotten planking over the old well and let himself down, hanging on with his hands, until his feet searched out the opening of the conduit through which the mains passed. Then he carefully scrambled down and entered this narrow tunnel and crawled along it with his sides scraping the walls and his head knocking against the dirty covering. At intervals he saw faint streaks of light breaking into the conduit and proceeded much more cautiously where these showed, for he knew

that this light was shining down through cracks in a floor and could not be certain whether it came from rooms occupied by the authorities or from a cell. At one of these places he struck his head against a small bit of wood that had been stuck between the boards and there he stopped, rapped carefully on the flooring and was rewarded by the sound of the slow, heavy steps of a man in irons and by a hoarse, hushed voice which whispered :

"Fly! No one has yet noticed anything."

It was Lapin speaking, he who had found this conduit during his confinement in the subterranean cell and had excavated a branch tunnel in the direction of the wall, working in the ground like a mole in order that some one from among his prison associates might escape from the death or madness that threatened him. He himself could not make use of this avenue to freedom because of his heavy irons, which, however, had not prevented him from doing all this burrowing work for some unknown member of the prison colony. It turned out happily that the candidate for escape was none other than his friend and old prison companion, Drujenin, or "Vaska," as he was generally known among the others.

The criminal prisoner condemned to a long term of servitude dreams ever of the possibilities of an escape and is consequently always preparing something for such an eventuality. He secretly removes bricks from the walls, saws the boards in the floor, slowly and laboriously cuts through iron bars, gives anything asked for a saw, a knife or the short crowbar which is called by the prisoners a "Tommy" and is used for breaking locks, and sometimes even achieves to the ownership of a *shpayer* or revolver. Such preparations for escape sometimes become a real mania in the older habitués, as their thoughts and hands are continuously working in this direction. No official knows the plan of the prison so well as the Ivans do. They are minutely acquainted with every possible hiding hole, especially those that are underground, because from

these it is easier to burrow the tunnels that will take them beyond the walls and to liberty.

During my wanderings through different prisons I frequently saw in the possession of the prisoners astonishingly detailed plans of several "stone sacks," carrying the dimensions of the space separating the outer walls from the most advantageous places for making escapes, as well as remarks as to the type of earth one would have to deal with, hard or friable, sandy or stony, wet or dry.

After Drujenin stopped under Lapin's cell and received from him the assurance that all was clear, he continued along the conduit in search of the lateral which Lapin had drifted in for him. His friend had evidently given him clear instructions, as he did not make the mistake of turning into any of the side branches but kept right on through the main artery, guiding himself by crawling along the largest pipes, which lay wrapped in asbestos and rags at the bottom of the tunnel. As he passed beneath my own cell, I heard a low scraping noise; but, since he did not attempt to speak to me, I gave him no signal. I must say that I warmly wished he might succeed and I mentally calculated how many more metres he had to go to reach the barrier which separated us all from liberty. I was excited, breathed hard and had hands that were cold from emotion.

Drujenin continued to crawl. Soon he came to the smaller tunnel and advanced a few feet only before his head struck the foundation wall of the building. Here he carefully felt the bricks with his hands until he discovered the hole made by Lapin. From this aperture to the street ran a still smaller mole runway under the enclosure wall. This passage was so much narrower that the fugitive could only lie flat on the earth and wriggle along. He had to move very slowly, as air was scarce and each successive exertion weakened him a little. Just as his heart was pounding furiously and the arteries in his temple

were throbbing, Drujenin arrived at an enlarged place, where he could kneel. He felt for the planks which Lapin had told him were placed there to keep the earth from caving and disclosing the outer mouth of the passage.

With better air there, he stopped and listened as in a trance. A dead silence reigned. Assured that the time was ripe, the escaping man carefully removed the boards and made a hole with his hand in the thin covering of earth that was all that now separated him from the outside world and everything it held in store for him. As he slowly pressed his head and shoulders out through the hole, he saw above him the night sky, unbounded by prison walls. With one final spring he was out and ready to make full use of the liberty he had gained.

"Seize him! Seize him!" shouted one of the outside sentinels—and shrill whistles mingled with the sound of running soldiers.

Before Drujenin had time to realize what had happened and to draw his knife, he was thrown from behind, had handcuffs clapped on his wrists and was surrounded by a group of keepers and soldiers under the leadership of the Commandant of the Prison. They quickly took him for his hope-blasting return journey and were soon in the prison office, writing up the record of his escape preparatory to putting him back into his chains.

When he re-entered Cell No. 1 pale as a ghost, with trembling lips and eyes full of pain, no one said a word to him; for they all understood, as though they were their own, the feelings of this man who, with only one step more to go to reach the coveted liberty, had been snatched back into the hated prison with dull, cold despair fastened upon his soul as firmly as the gyves on his body. Drujenin went straight to his bench and threw himself down upon it to the old dirge of his restored irons. For a long time he never moved, and only when he thought

that every one else was asleep, did he press his head with his hands and put his face into his pillow to stifle the wails of hopeless suffering which were struggling for expression.

The next day, when the whole room in significant and expectant silence waited for Drujenin to give them the details of the frustrated attempt, the depressed man pronounced only one short sentence :

"Malaika is a retriever (traitor)!"

The news that Malaika, the Tartar, a fellow-inmate of Cell No. 1, had divulged the planned escape to the authorities and that he was to be given as reward, first, the position of cook in the warden's quarters and, later, his freedom, made the round of the prison with lightning speed. In the big room and in several of the smaller cells men gathered in groups and were earnestly discussing something. Finally everything quieted down and Drujenin, in an indifferent voice as though he were reciting some anecdote, told the story of his unsuccessful attempt.

At the regular hour the prisoners went out for their walk in apparently the same manner as on any other day, yet the experienced eyes of the keepers detected a strong undercurrent of excitement running through the crowd. As the prisoners were crossing the yard on the way to the exercise pen, Malaika emerged from the warden's kitchen to go to the ice-house. In a second the men had surrounded him, were pushing him along in their midst to the cage and were joking with him good-naturedly. Though at first greatly frightened, Malaika began quieting down when he discovered that none of the Ivans from Cell No. 1 were in the crowd; but this was only a momentary calm, for he suddenly blanched white, as he discovered this group of old criminals coming out of the building. He was just on the point of crying out to attract the attention of one of the keepers, when a prisoner threw a jacket over his head and successfully

muffled him, while the others surrounded him and hid him from any outside observation.

After a moment the jacket was removed, and Malaika trembled, for Lapin stood before him and looked into his face with an expression that told volumes to the frightened man.

"You are afraid," said Lapin, "because you know what you did, you dog of a traitor, and what you have to expect!" He thought a moment and continued:

"I could strike you under the heart and kill you, but I want to give you a chance for salvation. Listen! If you have time to reach the second wall, no one will touch you; if not . . ."

Lapin had not time to finish, as Malaika had already started pushing his way through the prisoners and was calling wildly for the keepers. Before Malaika had gone very far in the yard, a big prisoner, called "Shilo" or "the Awl," threw himself on the Tartar, who, without stopping, flashed his knife to defend himself. But Shilo was too quick for him, as he stretched his great manacled arms above the traitor's head and brought his irons down upon it with such force that the man dropped as though he had been struck by lightning.

In a twinkling all the prison authorities were on the scene of the tragedy, the dead Malaika was removed to the hospital, the silent Shilo was put in a subterranean cell to await the advent of the examining magistrate, all the prisoners were driven back to their quarters and the doors of the cells throughout the whole building locked.

It is always thus. The sentences pronounced by the prisoners never go unexecuted, though the prison will pardon anything except treason.

Mironoff came to see me that same evening and, after a long silence, cautiously asked:

"*Starosta*, is not treason the most despicable thing on earth?"

"Yes," I answered briefly.

"You are right," he whispered, and left my cell.

But this was not the end of *Saryn da na kiechku*. Some days later, during the exercise hour, I saw Drujenin without his irons. His appearance struck me immediately, for he was so pale that he seemed almost transparent, and his eyes shone as though an interior fire blazed out through them.

"What is the matter?" I inquired of him, coming up to the fence around the pen.

"I cannot live longer in this way," he whispered in answer. "I am at the end of my endurance."

After this laconic and, to me, incomprehensible reply, he turned right away and began talking with Lapin. Suddenly the latter stopped abruptly, listened carefully to what his friend was saying and then evidently began explaining something to him, as I caught him surreptitiously pointing to a place in the outside wall.

I was soon to have all this made clear to me. When the exercise hour was finished and the prisoners were on their way to the building, two men slipped out from the crowd—Lapin and Drujenin. At first no one paid any attention to them, and the guards began to call them only when they had reached the enclosure wall. Suddenly Lapin bent over and leaned with his hands against the wall. Drujenin was on his back in a flash and was shot upward as his companion straightened to his full height. This allowed him to reach the coping with one hand, where he swung for an instant before he could secure a hold with his second and begin to scramble up.

Only a second was needed to take him over and outside the barrier, but that small measure of time was withheld from him by the Fate that was guiding his destinies. Two or three guards' rifles cracked, the bullets spattered the bricks, Drujenin straightened out, shuddered for a short instant and then slipped quietly to the ground,

where Lapin already lay prone with his powerful hands outstretched.

The tragedies of these two men were ended for ever. They had flown from the prison this time and could never again be recaptured nor brought back within its grinding walls.

CHAPTER XXVII

PRINCES OF THE PRISON

ONE day I was sitting in the large common cell, teaching the difficult art of writing. One of the prisoners formed the intricate letters with especial care. His name was Simon Saloff; he was an old man with long, silvery locks and beard, which gave him the appearance of a patriarch from the Bible but which did not prevent him from being a firebrand and a recidivist.

During the lesson I heard a signal in the corridor and, some moments later, I saw a group of people stopping before the grilled door of the cell. Among them I recognized the Prosecutor, the Chief of Police and some other officials. As they entered the room, the Commandant of the Prison ordered every one to his feet and, when we were all standing, whispered something to a grey-haired, grave-looking official with stripes on his sleeve indicating a high rank. This man turned to me and said:

"I thank you for teaching the prisoners. It is a very commendable act on your part."

"I take it that it is no act of special merit but simply a duty which I perform in place of the Government, since it pays no attention to this side of the prison life," I answered with a bow.

The high official looked sharply at me and said, as though to no one in particular:

"There are still many things to be reformed within these walls!"

It turned out that he was Prince Shirinsky-Shikhmatoff, the Inspector-General of all the Russian prisons, who was

at this time on a tour of inspection through the institutions of the Far East. He had the name of being a wise and liberal official, a reputation which his acts frequently justified.

The Prince began asking the prisoners whether they had any complaints to make regarding their treatment. As was usually the case, no one responded, for the prisoners almost never phrase complaints to these higher inspecting authorities but prefer to fight their own battles over their rights and privileges. When, however, the Prince asked if they had any petitions to submit to the tribunal, the whole room crowded around him and handed him all manner of requests, scribbled in untutored hands on dirty bits of paper. It is difficult to understand why they persist in doing this, for these petitions are never given any consideration; yet the ceremony of presenting them stubbornly persists and, in the jargon of the prisons, is called "*volinka*." The secretary of the Prince collected all these documents which the prisoners thrust forward and carelessly shoved them into his dispatch case.

The last to approach the Inspector-General was Saloff, the old patriarch. In a mysteriously impressive manner he recited to the Prince the story of his incarceration and made out a very logical case, showing himself to have been the victim of a judicial error. The words and the voice of the patriarch were fraught with such sincerity that Prince Shirinsky became so interested that he listened attentively and finally came close to the old man, questioned him and began making notes on some paper in his wallet. As he spoke, Saloff so warmed to his subject that his arms loosed themselves in excited and most appealing gestures. He wiped his streaming eyes and beat upon his breast.

When the Prince had noted down the most important details of the case, he turned to the Prosecutor and said:

"I desire personally to go through the records of the trial of this honourable old man."

"Certainly, Your Excellency," the Prosecutor answered.

"May the Almighty reward you a hundredfold," exclaimed the deeply moved Saloff, as he seized the hand of the Prince and tried to kiss it; "father, benefactor, protector of the unfortunate, guardian of innocent sufferers! . . ." The patriarch was sobbing loudly.

With a little bow to all of us, Shirinsky went out with his escort. Not fifteen minutes later the Commandant of the Prison in great agitation made the round of all the cells, asking if the Prince's wallet with all his money and documents had been found by any one, but with no result. As the troubled and angered Prince crossed the prison yard in the direction of the big gate, from a second storey window someone threw the wallet down, so that it landed right in front of the departing Inspector-General. While he was stooping to pick it up, from somewhere came the cry of:

"*Chiu! Chiu!*" which at once awakened the sleeping beast that lodged in the breast of every prisoner and brought from all sides violent repetitions of this call, by means of which the men voice their hate and disdain for the authorities. The prison regained its silence and calm only when the wicket gate closed behind the dignitary.

I learned afterwards not only that it was the "honourable old man" who had thrown down the empty wallet, which the Prince picked up without opening, but also that Shirinsky discovered, on arriving at his hotel, that, in addition to his money and his papers, his watch and chain and a diamond pin from his tie had likewise been left among the prisoners. Of course, none of the authorities in the prison had any knowledge as to who the thief actually was. And it was quite as natural that no results should have attended the search that was made; for, when prisoners can manage to hide anything up to a stolen locomotive, it was no task at all for them to *cache* such small articles as money and jewellery. In a prison there are hundreds of hiding places between the bricks of the walls, which are

as movable as the keys of a piano, and in planks slit with a saw and afterwards closed up with bread.

In such a despicable and false manner did the "honourable old man," the Biblical patriarch Saloff, repay the really well-intentioned Inspector-General for his sympathetic attitude in the old man's case. Some years later, when I was living in St. Petersburg, I quite fortuitously happened to glance at an article which stated that a Prince Shirinsky, who had formed the habit of borrowing money from the leading citizens of a little town without giving it back, had been arrested. The account continued that the investigation which followed revealed the Prince as a usurper, that he had no right to the position he claimed.

As I pondered over the article for a moment, wondering why it had arrested my attention, I suddenly recalled the prison room and the striking figure of Saloff, beating his breast and kissing the hand of the grave and stately Prince.

"Well, old prison bird, you must have flown and hidden under the cover of the stolen documents!" And I saw, as though it were in actual life before me, the cynical, careless face of my pupil, the patriarch, playing the rôle of Prince, after the limited tutoring he had received for it in our "prison academy."

In one of the gaols I met an old acquaintance, who turned up there in a group of Georgians. After they had been registered in the office and had come out into the yard for a walk, one of them approached me and laughingly exclaimed:

"Well, it is not nice to forget old friends. I am Prince Eristoff."

I had known of the family for a long time but had no distinct recollection of having met this member of it.

"I am sorry, but I don't remember you. I knew some Eristoffs in St. Petersburg. . . ."

"This Eristoff," he replied, tapping himself on the breast and laughing heartily, "was presented to you in

another place." He glanced at his companions, who smiled very broadly and all turned toward me.

"I don't remember," I repeated.

"Have you forgotten those *djighits* of the old coal-mine shaft by the Sungari whom you smoked out of their hole like badgers with a charge of pyroxylin?"

Recalling very distinctly the "elves" whom I had treated rather gruffly after they fired on us, I replied with a laugh:

"Ah yes, I remember you very well."

"We have all collected here," remarked Eristoff, "I, Gogio, Navadze—and you! This is indeed a strange meeting."

"Yes, it is strange. But what brought you here? Surely some 'misunderstanding,' such as you told me about then."

"H—m," muttered Eristoff. "They accuse us of having organized an attempt upon a cashier in Harbin."

"Against the one who was carrying a bag of money down to the river with a soldier as a guard and who was killed, and the bag thrown across a hedge, where it disappeared without a trace?" I hazarded.

"Yes. You also know about this?"

"I saw the whole thing with my own eyes. I even remember the figure of the man who attacked the pair," I replied, as I began to cast my eye over the tall, graceful form of Eristoff. He smiled, lowered his eyes and said:

"Strange things occur in this world."

In spite of what had passed between us near the Sungari and of the part which Eristoff had played in the bank-cashier affair, I struck up a close friendship with these children of the Caucasus, who had in their natures all the strength and freshness of the mountains, the warmth of constant sunshine and untrammelled boldness—the characteristics of outdoor, liberty-loving men. They did not compliment me by remaining long to cultivate and enjoy my society, for they flew away and in a manner that merits being told.

Late one night a new prisoner was brought into the room where the Georgians had been placed with some of the Ivans, who had been spending half their lives in transfers from one prison to another. The new-comer was about twenty-five years old, and possessed a tall, lithe figure that indicated great strength, but he was silent and gave the impression of being very shy. The inmates of the room accorded him a far from amiable reception.

"A pike (a man put in prison for the first time)!" they murmured. "They put him among us real prisoners?"

"We'll show him the stuff a real prisoner is made of," whispered the horse thief, Rukla, an immense man, built as though he were carved from granite. All the inmates of the room arose and began to surround the pike, who sat modestly and unmoved at the end of his bench. Only the Georgians did not rise.

Suddenly the youth raised his head, half closed his dark eyes and asked in a sneering, penetrating voice:

"Whom do you want to fight? Me, Demetrius, the Hawk?" As he spoke, he stood up and straightened himself with pride. "Try it, but look well to what you are about," he snapped at the crowd and, with extraordinary ease and agility, bent down and lifted a heavy bench, poised it over some of his hearers and threateningly continued:

"I shall kill you all because you did not recognize the Hawk, you green devils!" Then he laughed at his subdued attackers.

"Fighting is forbidden," came with an oath from a guard through the wicket.

The Hawk looked at him for one short second and then hurled the bench at the door, which boomed and reverberated under the blow. In an instant the keeper's whistle had brought soldiers to his side, and together they opened the door and ordered the Hawk to accompany them to a subterranean cell. He made no resistance and quitted the

room with calm dignity, only stopping at the threshold to bow himself out with the parting words :

"Good-bye ! Such a leader as I cannot dwell with worms !"

Leaving the room in profound silence, he passed down the corridor with his head in the air and with firm, soldier-like steps. The astonished prisoners remained silent for quite a moment, until finally Rukla muttered :

"Then it was the Hawk ? He is quite young still." Some one answered him :

"For three years the people through all the Urals were as frightened by the name of the Hawk as they were by that of the devil. No one ever seemed able to catch him, and he turned up in several places over all Russia." Then followed many legends about this prince of bandits.

After some days of punishment in the subterranean cell, he was brought back to the same room with Eristoff and the other Georgians. On his return the prisoners met him with profound respect.

"Ah, it is well," he smiled ; "this I understand."

For several days succeeding his reappearance I met and talked with this bandit leader and carefully studied him. Very polite in his speech, graceful and quiet in movement, he never showed feeling of any kind but always maintained a perfectly calm exterior. However, this was only an apparent calm, like that of a tiger in a cage.

Have you ever observed a tiger in captivity ? The magnificent beast of prey lies in stately repose with his powerful paws quietly resting in front of him and with his head poised as proud as a king, his bright, yellow eyes looking off into space without blinking and seeing neither the bars of his cage, the keeper nor the crowds of spectators staring in idle worship. When his pupils, looking like black rifts in the yellow beryls, happen to light on a man before him, one has the impression that he looks right through the human being and sees beyond him the vast

range of the forest, to which he silently and deeply longs to return.

The Hawk looked in this same way upon his companions, the keepers and the prison. His soul, wild and untamed, longed for freedom. As he entered the cramping walls, what had such a one left behind? The dangerous adventures which his unleashed, sparkling and restless nature craved as its natural food? And perhaps he saw in the crystal ball of his dreams the garden of cherry-trees with her, the beloved of his young, warm heart, gay, brightly clad and with eyes filled with laughter and with love for him?

Quietly the Hawk made a thorough survey of all his companions in the cell and finally, selecting the Georgians, went to them and whispered:

"Do you want to fly?"

"Indeed we do," Eristoff answered for himself and his companions, "for the court will not show any fondness for us."

"Well, then listen to me."

They deliberated and discussed for a long time; then, after supper, the Hawk went to each one of the men in the room, looked him sharply in the eyes and repeated in every instance:

"I am going to escape with the Georgians. We begin to work to-day. You must help and be silent."

This same night their active preparations were started. The Hawk found a place where some one had cut the boards in the floor and, leaving his clothes on the bench under his blanket, he crawled down through the hole. Soon the prisoners could make out the noise of a small, sharp trowel. The Hawk was digging steadily and only interrupted his work when he heard a low knock on the floor, which told him that the keeper was near the door of the cell. Before dawn the Hawk had the earth packed into two bags and hidden away underneath his board bed. Throughout all his efforts the Georgians assisted him. Naturally the most

difficult part of the operation proved to be the transportation of the dirt out of the cell during the day. Some was put in the *parasha*, which two of the strongest prisoners carried away, pretending that it was very light. The rest of the earth was taken out in the pockets of the prisoners, when they went for their walk, and was cautiously strewn about and trampled down in the prison yard.

Each night this burrowing work continued. The Hawk gradually drove his passage down in the direction and under the foundation of the wall, afterwards sloping upward again and making for a drainage ditch that ran down into the river. Day by day the digging increased in difficulty, owing to the fact that the air supply grew ever less and less. The men changed at short intervals and always returned from the tunnel in a state of exhaustion.

After the first few days of their work I could hardly recognize two of the Georgians, so sallow were their faces with pallid lips and sickly looking eyes. Their trembling hands also proved how hard and tiring the task was proving. When I asked Eristoff the reason for these symptoms which I observed in him, he took me into his confidence and told me of all that was going on, asking me also, in case he should perish during the attempt, to send a letter for him.

In the course of a few days the Georgians were so weakened that they could no longer work, and consequently the Hawk had to continue alone. The others could only help him to bring out the earth and hide it under the floor or under the beds. But the Hawk also finally came near to the end of his powers. One night he crawled back into the hole, taking with him the two bags tied to a rope, as though they were buckets on an endless chain, and continued along until he saw the electric pocket-lamp which he had left at the end of the tunnel. Lying flat on his face, the Hawk dug with his trowel the fine black earth and managed to fill the bag at his end of the double rope, gave the signal and soon had the other sack at his side

ready to be filled. He worked thus for a long time, but his breathing became ever more and more laborious and his trowel moved much more slowly in the humid earth; nor did he have sense enough to know that blood was trickling from his nose and mingling with the sweat from his forehead and face.

Suddenly he had the impression that some one had dealt him a sharp blow on the head. He felt that he wanted to turn round and protect himself from a second, but something throttled him and he began to choke. A rattling sound came in his throat, the trowel slipped from his hand and he opened his eyes to see only the tunnel end, lighted by the electric lamp. Meanwhile the prisoners were whispering among themselves:

"What a strong man this Hawk is! He works for such a long time without ever coming out."

The small bags of earth, emerging from the end of the tunnel under the floor, gave a rather frightening, mysterious impression of this man who dug there below and sent back these silent messengers of his incredible power. Finally Eristoff remarked that an abnormally long interval had elapsed since the Hawk had given the signal to drag out the bag. The rope was pulled but no answer came.

"He has swooned from want of air," said Eristoff. "We must get him out."

With the help of an additional rope attached to his feet, one of the Georgians crawled in and brought the Hawk out. As soon as he had been restored to consciousness and had rested a little, the intrepid miner returned once more to the tunnel, at whose end the little flashlight burned like a torch of liberty.

The work of these human moles lasted for almost a month, until finally the tunnel joined the principal prison drain that ran into the ditch outside. I remember so vividly being awakened on that memorable night by the noise of crashing benches, the cries and howls of maddened men, the shouts and whistles of the keepers and the pound-

ing of the soldiers' feet through the long corridors. Though it all seemed very real, the experienced ear could detect the artificial character of this hubbub, and I surmised that an escape was being staged. I was quite right, for this same night during the terrible row that was started by the Georgians, whose lead was usually followed by the whole prison, the Hawk, Eristoff and his companions went "flying" beyond the prison walls. This prince of the prison was right when he announced, on the day of his arrival, that he could not live with worms.

We knew that the fugitives were not caught, because on the following day, during the exercise hour of the prisoners, a little keg of vodka was tossed over the wall into the prison yard, carrying on one side of it the single word "Caucasus," and on the other the signature of the Hawk. Unfortunately the cask did not remain in the hands of the prisoners, as it was pounced upon by a guard and taken into the prison office.

This was the "P. P. C." card of the knightly Georgians under their titled Caucasian leader and of the fear-inspiring bandit chief, this "Prince of the Prison."

CHAPTER XXVIII

LOVE IN IRONS

EVERYWHERE that men and women meet, be it in great and throbbing cities, on the solitary islands of a distant sea or even in those prison wards where night and day the clang of chains is heard,—everywhere the little god with bow and quiver silently and persistently stalks his human quarry. He looses his shafts, regardless of whether they are to be messengers of happiness and joy or are to carry torture and pain.

As he courses the open stretches of the great wide world of humanity, so he fights his way through the jungle of the prison, the prison where men and women, penned apart by thick walls and iron bars, grope out a life full of despair and longing, never meeting face to face and only at rare intervals exchanging some distant words. But the prison possesses great inventive faculties and consequently always assists the little god of love to make his targets sure and clear.

The gay little sportsman is not difficult to please. He has an eye for hearts only, and it is nothing to him if the owners happen not to be very good looking. He looses his arrow at his victim with unhesitating keenness, even though she may have a face besmeared with smallpox scars or freckles or set with eyes that are aslant and with a mouth of bad design.

One evening, as I was writing in my cell, I suddenly heard a noise in the yard, the evidently enthusiastic cries of the prisoners, women's voices and, later in the evening and during the whole night, whistlings and telegraphic

signals running through the walls. It seemed as though the whole prison had lost its head. Raps on the walls came from everywhere in such a confusion that I could not distinguish and read the separate signals, and I finally went to sleep to the accompaniment of this continual whistling and knocking.

In the morning it all became clear to me. A large group of women had been brought in, all of them culprits condemned to long terms of imprisonment. They had been put on the ground floor directly under the cell of the Ivans, in which I had been wont to set up my moving university, as this was the most populated room in the building.

While I was watering some of the flowers in our garden, I watched a very unusual and impressive, though entirely unrehearsed, scene from life's ever-moving drama. Some of the women prisoners sat in the windows and talked quite loudly with the men on the floor above them. The stories were always serious and usually carried a note of sadness or despair running through them. They told about their lives and the causes of their coming to prison—and what varied causes they were! Betrayed love and jealousy; the brutalities of drunken husbands; harsh material conditions; everyday caprices; the fear of death from hunger for themselves and for their children; degeneracy; natural criminal propensities; discontent with life or some quite distinct psychic deviations, which are tantamount to a terrible and incurable malady—all these were cited as causes that had started these women along the path of crime, which finally led into the prison yard. They spoke of all these things with voices as sad and sincere as though they were at confession, some of them even weeping and wringing their hands. The whole unexpected scene was for me such a strange and moving picture that for a long time I could not regain my composure.

Later, watching what went on, I saw that the Ivans began to send letters, packages of cigarettes, sugar, soap

and other little gifts by means of bits of twine and string which they had pieced together. With the aid of these lines there also travelled up from the ground floor the answering missives and the women's gifts, bits of looking-glass, ribbons, tobacco and sometimes even a bit of chocolate or a fruit lozenge.

After dinner, when I went into Cell No. 1 and invited them all to be seated, as I was about to begin a lecture, one of the prisoners came up to me and said rather naïvely :

"*Starosta*, to-day we have other things in mind and . . . here !" pointing to his heart. "Women have come to the prison, and it is a happy day for us. In these awful bags of stone and brick, in these rooms cursed a thousand times, we live a life of depression without any morrow, without hope. When we hear the voices of these women, who have not yet had time to become such monsters as the prison has made of us, we feel as though a breath of fresh, pure air had come in from the outside world ; we picture our families, whom we shall certainly never see again ; and in thought we transport ourselves to other places, where our mothers, sisters, wives or our betrothed are waiting for us. Hope returns to us, the hope that cleans our souls, rotting here behind these bars." He smiled bashfully and added in a whisper :

"To-day we don't want learning, *Starosta* !"

I laughed and was just about to go out, when the oldest prisoner in the cell, one Boitsoff, mail-coach robber, came stumping along to me on his wooden leg. The man was seventy years old and carried on his face the marks of cursed Sakhalin—slit nostrils, which were almost hidden by his thick, bristling moustache and a beard that grew far up his cheeks. His height was immense, and he possessed colossal strength, in spite of his age.

"Sit down," he muttered. "I want to talk to you."

After I sat down, Boitsoff was silent for a long time. Finally he pointed to the prisoners who were crowding near the window to talk with the women by means of

ropes, which are called "telephones" in the language of the prison.

"Do you understand this, *Starosta*?" he asked in a whisper. When I remained silent, he continued in a still lower voice:

"They are grown up, some of them even old men, and yet they act like boys." He stopped and began filling his pipe, then went on:

"It is the prison that does this. Deprived of all of the joy of life, they seek it as a fish struggles back to the water, as a bird seeks the open sky and as a flower turns to the sun. Where is justice? Will such a form of punishment cleanse and heal the soul? Humanity is committing a great crime, an inexplicable one. We prisoners are human dust. Humanity, in its pursuit of personal happiness and riches, hurries along the great highway of life, rushing upon, trampling and grinding to dust those whom chance or a temporary weakness may have sent to their knees. Humanity, in this mad rush of life, has made us what we are, and man never understands that the time has come to stop hurrying and trampling upon the bodies of others, making new clouds of human dust. When this dust begins to reach the eyes and throats of men and to cover everything about them with a disgusting coating, they gather it up, put it into the stone bag, and, thinking that they have done all that is necessary for their peace, continue to grind out new dust, as they hurry with ever-increasing speed along the road of life. Whither are they going? To the precipice ahead—the day of revenge!"

The eyes of the old robber gleamed, his breast heaved and the words came from his mouth like stones hurled from a catapult. I listened carefully to the tirade of Boitsoff, because I realized that he was voicing the massed thoughts of the population of the Russian prisons. And I thought with terror then what it would mean, if all these men who held such views should one day come forth in a

body from their prisons and take into their hands this weapon of revenge.

Fate strangely willed that I should have to be witness to such a supposedly unimaginable event. It was in the days when Bolshevism opened the doors of the prisons and called upon the "human dust" to wreak this long-deferred revenge, at which the perverted mass, wildly intoxicated by its opportunity, made rivers of blood to flow and ravaged as a destroying storm, as a laughing, mocking hurricane, the whole great breadth of the Empire.

In the meantime the life of the prison ran its expected course, reflecting the ordinary manifestations of the normal existence in the world without. While the women were few, the number of men amounted to nearly five hundred, and each one of these wanted to hear the voice of a woman directed to him exclusively. Because of this, quarrels began, jealousy naturally breeding fights, in which not only strong arms and fists came into full play but knives as well. Though this state of affairs filled the prison hospital, the coming of the women had another and more desirable effect, that of cleaning up the atmosphere of the place, as the awful oaths and curses were no longer heard through all the day and the night as well. The men began speaking in low and well-controlled voices, they stopped singing their far from refined songs and gave up their equally questionable stories. Nor did the cleansing and ennobling influence stop here, for the men also began to spruce up their appearance in every way possible, so that one rarely met any one unwashed, half-clad or with unkempt hair. The prison veritably looked regenerated.

In this unusual atmosphere some love dramas were enacted before my very eyes. One rainy day, when I was sitting in my cell, I heard the following conversation :

"We have told each other everything, Katerina," came in a sonorous, serious voice from the upper cell. "We know each other as well as if we had lived together for years"

"It is true, it is true, indeed," came the answer in a woman's voice. "You have a good heart, that understands the pain of others."

"Listen, Katerina, I was condemned for a term of three years, of which only two months remain."

"You are fortunate," sighed Katerina; "I have still to sit here for two years and have a long road of suffering ahead of me."

"For us two years are nothing. I shall go out and begin to work at once, for I am a carpenter and am skilled at my trade. Now that I have come to know you, I shall not return to my former life with its attempt to get a great deal of money without regard for the consequences. I am a changed man and I want to work honestly."

"You speak rightly and with courage, Paul," the woman answered in a low voice.

Silence prevailed for a time, while both of them were evidently immersed in thought. I had, however, the feeling that the conversation was far from finished and that it needed only a word or two to decide the future that was trembling in the hearts of these two people.

"Katerina," finally came in the subdued voice of the man.

"I am here, Paul."

"Listen to what I have to say. Life crushed us and threw us into prison. We have suffered the great torture of crime, trial and punishment. It is possible and was very likely that we should have remained lost souls for our whole life, forced by the mark of the prison to become habitual criminals; but God ordained that we should meet, and now everything is changed. Now we can help each other, return to the life of freedom and live down the memory of our torture. Do you long for this as I do?"

The woman did not answer for a long time and then only with a hesitating, hardly audible:

"How?"

"Be my wife, Katerina!" the man answered in a low

voice, full of evident emotion, solemn as though he were speaking in church. "Do you understand? When I leave the prison, I shall ask permission to marry you."

"But I shall only be free after two years," the woman whispered despairingly.

"That is nothing," came back from the man in buoyant, joyous tones. "I shall wait and work, preparing our home for your coming. Will you say 'yes'?"

"I thank you, Paul. I thank you in the name of God," the woman whispered—and in a moment tears were mingled with her words. "Your heart is good; it is white. . . . I shall give my life for you. . . . I thought that I was to perish here; then you came and gave me your hand to help me back to hope, Paul. . . ."

Some one shouted loudly:

"The water is ready for making tea. Go to the kitchen!"

Their conversation was interrupted, but two months later a ceremony took place in the prison chapel, when Paul Rozanoff, having finished his term, was married to Katerina Gulaieff. There was no wedding breakfast, and after the ceremony the husband went away, and the iron doors slammed behind him, while the wife returned to her prison cell, where she remained, however, quiet, thoughtful and happy. Every Sunday, Paul came to visit her, bringing food and gifts and, with a happy light in his eyes, showing her his hard, calloused hands.

"These two people will not perish," I thought with joy and satisfaction. "The prison will not destroy them but will remain in their lives only as a nightmare of the long ago."

Perhaps this pair, so curiously met and drawn together by suffering, were afterwards very happy and freed by their trials from the lesser difficulties of life. I want to believe that it was so.

When the prisoners had become well acquainted through the medium of the telegraph and "the telephone," the second stage of the prison love-stories was ushered in—

they wanted to see one another face to face. In this crisis the inventive faculties of the old prisoners came to their aid. I soon discovered that they had all secured from somewhere looking-glasses. The men above focused broken bits of this wonder glass upon the mirrors which the women held in their hands stretched out through the bars below, and the inspections proceeded. Smiles, flirtations and real coquetry ensued; kisses were even wafted through the air, accompanied by laughs and sighs, as the little god flew back and forth from cell to cell and made most heartless slaughter.

From my own observations and from the accounts of prisoners I know that many very happy and lasting marriages have resulted from the romances of the prison and have survived the severe trials of the "free life," where men struggle for existence in such selfish blindness that they pay little attention to the weaker ones who fall in the fight and try then to drag themselves up again to follow with the rest.

However, the prison love-stories did not always have such pleasant endings. I remember one case that was very interesting from several standpoints. Once in the summer a woman was led into the prison, who was reported to have been brought there through a family drama. She had killed her husband and had given herself up to the judge. During the investigation of her case she was kept in a separate cell by herself. Of a rich merchant family, she was a beautiful woman, tall and gracious, with a mass of soft, fair hair crowning a sweet but very sad face. As she always looked straight ahead out of a pair of dark-blue, widely opened eyes with an expression of astonishment, I thought, when I saw her for the first time, that she was not entirely sane; and I am even now not sure but that this may have been the case. Owing to the appeal in her personality, and also to the fact that some one paid the Commandant of the Prison well for the privilege, she was allowed to walk all day long in the exercise pen;

and often I watched her, as she paced back and forth from one corner to the other, wrapt in thought and smiling sadly at what was evidently passing time and again through her mind.

The prisoners began to question her and tried to make her acquaintance, but she gazed with terror upon the barred windows and the caged beings behind them and never spoke.

"A proud woman," the prisoners decided and paid her no more attention.

One day, as she was taking her walk as usual, the Commandant of the Prison approached and talked with her for a long time. The woman, after having been so long without an opportunity to speak with people of her kind, was evidently pleased and began talking vivaciously, once even laughing sincerely and loudly. This was the undoing of her. The prisoners looked out through the bars with flashing eyes upon the apparently lighthearted pair and, when the Commandant took his leave of her, they loosed a storm of curses and awful oaths at the woman. Thoroughly frightened, she left the pen and ran to her cell.

The next day during the exercise hour, when the men were walking in their enclosure, the unknown woman came out into the cage for the women and, approaching the fence on the side toward them, proudly drew herself up and asked of the prisoners in a sad but musical voice:

"Why did you wrong me so yesterday? Why, pray?"

At first the embarrassed prisoners remained silent, but suddenly one of the Georgians, Mikeladze, ran over to the fence and upbraided the woman in anger:

"You are proud toward us, but toward this executioner, the Commandant, no!"

With these words he hurled a stone at her and struck her in the breast. The woman swayed and put her hand to her heart. The political prisoners ran to her aid, while the criminal prisoners at once retreated from their fence.

Revenge had been taken, and nobody seemingly paid any attention to the victim—with one marked exception.

He was a new inmate of the prison, a terrible one, as terrifying as a bird of prey. He was even like a bird of prey because of his eyes, his sharp features and his movements, filled with a dominating sense of power. He was called "the Eagle" and had been the leader of a gang of robbers terrorizing the Amur. He wore irons on his hands and feet and expected to be condemned to death, but the tribunal was slow in reaching its decision, owing to the fact that it was having investigations made in several towns through which his bloody trail had passed.

The Eagle was confined in a separate cell, where for whole hours at a time he stood holding the bars and looking out through them at the beautiful woman, as she walked in the yard. That same day he met the Georgian, who had thrown the stone at the woman, in the corridor of the second floor and hurled the man down a flight of stairs with such emphasis that the Georgian had some broken ribs to count when he arrived at the bottom.

"That from the Eagle, because of your treatment of a lady," the man in irons shouted after the fallen Georgian and calmly turned away to go to the kitchen to get water for his tea.

The attack on the good-looking woman excited the women prisoners, who had also taken umbrage at the behaviour of the new arrival. Sneers, petty vexations and nagging began, while some of the old timers even attacked her and injured her rather seriously. Then the authorities moved her to a separate cell on the second floor, for some days after which she was never seen, going neither for walks nor to the kitchen for water. In vain the Eagle watched for her through the bars of his window; in vain also the prison awaited her appearance, wishing with its cry of "*Chiu! Chiu!*" to manifest its hate and disdain for the person who enjoyed the special favour of the authorities. The sad woman seemed to have disappeared, although

it was known to all that she was still somewhere in the prison.

Then there came a night of storm. Lightning constantly rent the black mantle of clouds that covered the sky; thunder shook the prison buildings and emphasized their gloom; terror seemed to have shackled nature; a fearful expectancy filled the souls of the prisoners.

The Eagle gazed up at the black sky, watching the lightning that shredded it, and turned away to pace up and down his cell. Without realizing it, he tramped ever quicker and quicker, like a wild beast in its cage. Suddenly he stopped and looked out of the side window in his corner cell, which was half boarded up. He practically never glanced out through this, as it gave on a narrow alleyway separating it from the next building only ten feet away, in which the openings were also covered with boards. To his surprise he noticed that the window directly opposite his had lost its wonted covering and was now hung with a white curtain or a sheet, through which the light shone from some one's cell.

The Eagle stood and watched intently, as the shadow of a person moving about with his hands on his head was thrown on the screen. Suddenly the person came nearer to the window, and the Eagle realized that it was a woman. He climbed up on his bench, so that he could press his face against the pane. When he found the boards bothered him, he seized them in his powerful hands and pulled them away from the rusty nails that held them. As he once more drew close to the pane and looked across to the lighted window, he saw the woman slowly removing the pins from her hair, which fell down over her shoulders and breast like a soft mantle. Involuntarily the Eagle gave an exclamation of surprise and joy, as he realized that it must be the woman who had been maltreated by the prisoners.

With a rattle of his irons the prisoner opened his window and sat for a long time watching the lighted frame in the

opposite wall, although the shadow of the woman had long since disappeared. After waiting for a sufficient interval to assure himself that the woman was already in bed, he began to sing. It was a wild, monotone chant, like the drive of gusts of rain upon the autumn leaves. He sang about the mighty river, the swift boats of the robbers, about bloody fights, pursuits and escapes; then, with his measured tones swung into a wail, he sang of the prison life; and, after this, louder and more sonorously, he sang of dreams that remain dreams, of love that is already dead. Something at once elemental and beautiful lay in this song of the robber. It was as though the soul of this man were singing, as though a powerful wave mounted to his breast and from there ran out to surge against the prison wall.

Suddenly he stopped singing and began to whistle. From the great chest, deepened by the life of the forest and the river, came forth a low, trembling sound, filled with a sad dreaminess. Gradually the tones augmented in volume and strength, changing to a melody passionate, wild and warm. As I listened to this whistling, I understood the voice of the nightingale in spring, when it sees and hears nothing in its complete obsession by song. It was love, longing for the unknown, beloved woman; it was a request, powerful and masterful.

The woman in the opposite cell felt it also, for the dominating will of the robber lured her to the window. She pushed back the curtain a little and saw his face, full of love, admiration and prayer.

The whistling ceased. The Eagle stretched his manacled hands out toward the woman and whispered:

"I cannot live without seeing you. I cannot!"

The woman remained silent, and he continued to whisper:

"Such a man as I can also love, perhaps even more deeply and warmly than those of the free life!"

"I am sad . . ."

"What is it that troubles you? Ease your soul, for I

shall understand everything, because I myself have passed through the fire of torture . . . and I love," came back from the Eagle in unmistakable syllables of warmth and enthusiasm.

The woman, perhaps for the first and last time, told the story of her life and finished with a sigh.

"Just one day of freedom to see my little daughter, and afterwards even death would be endurable."

The Eagle thought profoundly and then said to her :

"Why death? I shall arrange an escape for you, and for this remember the Eagle sometimes and say a prayer for him."

"An escape for me?" she queried, unable to believe her ears.

"Yes," said the Eagle. "Demand that they take you on Saturday to see the magistrate. Such is the law, and they cannot refuse you. The rest will be done for you by others."

"I will never forget you, never, if you do this for me. God will hear the prayers of my innocent child."

Just here the keeper, on his rounds to see that everything was in order, interrupted the talk.

Throughout the next two days the Eagle whistled a great deal, frequently putting his fingers in his mouth and giving long, sharp blasts, which were nothing more than signals in the game he was arranging; for, during the exercise hour on the second afternoon, an invisible hand threw a stone over the prison wall, carrying the short but significant message: "It is all arranged."

Saturday evening the keeper entered the woman's cell and told her that he had come to take her to see the magistrate in accordance with her request. She did not return to prison. The restlessness and suppressed excitement which ruled throughout the night in the prison office gave clear indication that something unusual had occurred. Some days later I learned from the Commandant that robbers had attacked the keeper who was escorting the

woman, taken his arms from him, gagged him and, after having tightly roped him, rolled him under a pile of planks, where he was not discovered until the following day. The woman under escort had disappeared and, up to that date, had not yet been found. The investigation of the affair revealed the fact that she had been at home, taken her little girl and fled.

For a fortnight after the Eagle looked pensive but at the same time happy and proud. The resourceful leader evidently had trusty members of his gang outside the walls, who could be depended upon to carry out his will. He was soon tried and, though he expected a death sentence, he felt that the sad, large-eyed woman and her little daughter had evidently prayed for him, inasmuch as the tribunal unexpectedly found extenuating circumstances and sentenced him to only four years of close confinement.

As he was being taken away to another prison, he ceremoniously bowed to the ground before all the prisoners and officials, as though he were taking an oath to the earth, and said :

"I shall endure my punishment and then I shall search her out, as I cannot live without her."

Only two persons within the prison walls knew to whom the robber chief referred—Mironoff and I. Mironoff, the Eagle's friend, knew it from the chief himself; and from Mironoff I learned it with many of the other details of the story. Both of us were silent—Mironoff, because he was a prisoner; and I, because I had beheld a burning torture and a love, beautiful in its power and its elemental strength.

CHAPTER XXIX

TWO POLES, A BEAM AND A DANGLING ROPE— THIS THE GUERDON A ROBBER MAY HOPE

ONE day I learned that Shilo, the one who had killed the traitorous Tartar, Malaika, had been taken to the court for his trial. No one doubted that Shilo would return condemned to death.

The whole prison became silent. Men talked in subdued voices, as though they were afraid of disturbing some spirit that was dominating the establishment. Many also were frightened or gripped in a vice of longing to be away from it all.

During the exercise hour the prisoners heard the noise of wheels outside the main entrance and, watching intently, saw the door swing open to admit the bent frame of Peter Shilo, seeming more than ever weighted down by his irons. His guard of armed soldiers followed him, as he crossed the yard to the office with a slow, almost despondent tread. As he passed the exercise cage, he cast a glance at the faces of his companions but carried on without a word. However, the prisoners fully understood the meaning in his appeal, for his glance seemed in silence to cry from fright and despair and to beg passionately for their help. The whole figure of Shilo, weakened, bent and listless, impressed itself upon the others.

"All is ended," some one whispered.

"He is already a dead man," a young, red-haired prisoner put in. "Until the evening he will perhaps continue to hope that the Governor will not confirm the sentence . . . and in the night. . . Oh, comrades, it is terrible, terrible

to have to live through such a night of torture, when waiting for death!"

After a few moments the Ivans appeared and entered the separate cage set apart for the prisoners in irons. They marched one behind the other, in repulsive, almost terrifying line—and Shilo was the last. He had already mastered his emotions and walked with his usual step, carrying his head high and looking straight into the eyes of every one.

"It is for to-morrow," he said, coming up to Mironoff and Boitsoff.

"We have heard."

"The judges ended things for me to-day, ended them once for all . . . they condemned me."

"Well?" came almost involuntarily from the old, experienced prison wolves.

"The gallows," whispered Shilo, and quickly turned away to attempt to walk up and down in his usual manner; but something drew him back close to the others, as though he were afraid to remain with his own thoughts.

"The lawyer who defended me did it well, saying that I was justified in killing the traitor; and, when sentence was passed, he promised to write for me a petition for amnesty."

"They will commute the death sentence to hard prison," Mironoff responded in a half-hearted way, not daring to look straight at the condemned man.

"They will hang me," Shilo replied with conviction. "If there is no word to-night, then it is the end. Well, after all, I must perish sometime."

His voice was becoming unsteady and husky; but then he gathered himself together once more, shook his head in a devil-may-care gesture and broke out in a robber's lay:

"Two poles, a beam and a dangling rope—
This the guerdon a robber may hope . . ."

He did not, however, get further with his song but

turned back to the middle of the cage, going from one group to another and repeating the same words :

"This night I shall have the answer and I know that I'll have to swing for it."

As he said this, he looked questioningly and with passionate longing into the eyes of his prison friends, expectantly waiting for their protests and for some word of hope and consolation. Then he returned once more to Mironoff and repeated the query to him :

"They will hang me to-night. Don't you think so ?"

Mironoff looked him straight in the eyes, thought for a moment and whispered :

"Listen, Peter. During the whole night we can talk together over the telegraph. It will be easier for you. What do you say ?"

Shilo felt a cold shiver run over him and gave no answer, turning away instead. A martyr's smile momentarily disguised the true expression of his mouth but disappeared at once.

"Peter, Peter!" called old Ruzia, the Jew, from the second cage.

"What do you want?" asked the condemned man, approaching him.

Ruzia looked around carefully and then whispered to him :

"I shall give you a loaf of bread with something in it."

"What?" demanded Shilo.

"A revolver. When they take you there, use it. Perhaps you will escape. . . . To a condemned man the risk matters little. Or perhaps you will die fighting . . . and that is better than the gallows."

"Give it to me!" said Shilo masterfully.

As Ruzia cautiously drew the loaf from out his baggy coat and hurriedly stretched it forth toward Shilo, the latter suddenly withdrew his hand and stepped back from the fence, saying :

"I will not take it, Ruzia; I will not. Time's up for me. . . . Nothing matters now, for the end must come."

These words sounded as the man's final and irrevocable condemnation.

A ball, thrown by one of the prisoners, fell on the ground right near Shilo. He quickly stooped to pick it up and threw it straight up into the air with all his might. As this plaything, made of leather thongs, reached the top of its high flight, Shilo cried out :

"Flee, flee for ever !"

But when the ball came down again in the pen, Shilo shuffled his chains over to it, picked it up and tossed it once more as high as he could, again crying after it :

"Flee ! . . . I give thee freedom. Flee !"

As the ball fell a second time within the enclosure, Shilo scornfully kicked it with his chain-bound foot and turned away.

"Enough of this ! I am tired of it all," and without a further word he dragged his chains to his cell.

The exercise hour was over, and the prison was silent except for the sound of the clanging irons and the quick, heavy step of the condemned man, which could be heard throughout the whole second storey. Shilo walked and walked, until finally he lay down, after he had assured himself that the last change of the guards before midnight had taken place. Somewhere a clock struck twelve. The prisoners shuddered and listened, but Shilo made no move. Then suddenly there travelled along the walls a conglomerate of agitated signals.

"That is Shilo," was whispered through all the rooms.

The condemned man spelled out word after word.

"Mironoff, Mironoff, it is already past midnight and there is no answer from the tribunal ! I am so terribly afraid. . . . What will it be ? Shall I die ? Is it possible ?"

"Christ have mercy on us !" breathed one of the prisoners near Mironoff, sighing and wringing his hands.

Mironoff answered with firm, strong raps.

"Such is life. We live to-day and are gone to-morrow. Each of us must one day die, Peter."

"But it is night already, and at dawn they will come and get me. Is it possible? Oh, Lord!"

"Don't give way Peter; don't be afraid. We shall all cross, sooner or later, all of us."

"But I am afraid . . . I am afraid—and of what?"

The signals through the wall ceased, yet for a long time the whole prison listened in an unreasoned terror of suspense. But from the cell of the condemned man there came no further sound. Only the barking of dogs and the other never-ceasing noises of the night floated in from the town, while through the banks of black clouds scudding north the moon searched out an occasional rift to look down upon the dark, threatening mass of the prison.

"I am afraid. Give me some help!" came once more in the code of the condemned.

This time Mironoff did not answer.

"Is he asleep? What is the matter?" asked one of the prisoners with a show of impatience.

"Hush!" hissed old Boitsoff.

Once more they listened more intently, for Shilo was wildly signalling, hurrying the words and not always ending them. In his torture by deadly fright he was begging aid of some one. Suddenly Mironoff broke in with his raps, striking the wall with something hard and firm.

"Peter, do you hear?" he queried.

"Listen! It is hard to die without fighting, I know. Why not cheat them and . . . do it yourself?"

The prisoners all held their breath. Shilo was silent for some moments and then asked:

"Tell me how?"

Again the whole prison listened. Through the medium of his same sure, firm strokes Mironoff wired back just one word:

"Glass!"

In the hush that followed the prisoners strained their ears with ever-increasing tenseness, but at first they caught only the ordinary waves of the night lapping up their

buttressed isle ; but finally they distinguished clearly the unmistakable noise of breaking glass—then silence again.

This in turn was quickly broken by the changing of the guard with its accompanying calls of the soldiers and keepers, the rattle of grounding arms and the rhythm of marching feet. As soon as quiet once more reigned, the appeal of Mironoff was heard.

"Shilo!" No answer, and again the signals, frightened and quick :

"Shilo! Shilo!" But the condemned sent no reply.

"Everything is finished," moaned Boitsoff in a dismal voice. "God have mercy on his soul!"

The words of the old prisoner were mingled with the frantic knocks of Mironoff, repeatedly calling to his prison friend.

It was a terrible night, one that I shall always remember as a frightful nightmare. Perhaps those of you who have never experienced the nerve-wearing strains of prison life or have never been under sentence of death may feel that there is some exaggeration in the emotions I have tried to depict as harassing this night ; but I felt them all a thousand times more keenly than any reader can vicariously do, especially those of Shilo, for I had gone through it all myself only some months before. Throughout the night I lay pressing my fevered head between my hands, feeling as though pity, despair and hate were gnawing at my heart and poisoning my soul.

I really do not know how long I spent in this state, but suddenly I jumped from my bed and peered out of my window, through which the first rays of the dawn were visible. I had no more than reached it, when, from out of the deep silence of the hours before the day, there suddenly came along the walls a new rush of hurried signals.

"It is I, Shilo. I am amnestied! Really amnestied! . . . When the guard was changing, I was taken to the chancery to be given the news of a telegram from the Governor, saying that my sentence had been changed to

life imprisonment. I have only just returned to my cell. Amnestied. . . . Life !”

Among the prisoners a buzz like that in a hive commenced, full of emotion, joy and thankfulness.

During the regular daily inspection by the Commandant the prisoners asked for a service in the prison chapel. Although I am not of the Orthodox Russian Church, I went also, expecting to see a very unusual ceremony ; nor was I disappointed.

Shilo was in the leading group of the praying prisoners. He prayed passionately, with most graphic gestures making the sign of the Cross, kneeling and bowing repeatedly before the altar. When he rose up and fastened his gaze upon the holy emblem, his eyes were full of such a faith and thankfulness that I felt the soul of this criminal, who had passed through the torture of awaiting death, was at this moment at the feet of God, the Supreme Judge. As he held his eyes steadily on the Cross, he wept and repeated only one word :

“ Life . . . Life ! ”

The convicts watched their chained companion, who saw and heard nothing around him in his earnest, ardent prayer, and the fires of emotion and joy lighted their eyes. Surely, in this moment of great relief and spiritual quickening, a wise, well-spoken word of consolation, encouragement and hope might easily have snatched from the clutches of criminal instinct many of these lost, tormented souls. But all this happened in that bag of human dust, this dust which interested nobody and into whose soul nobody cared to look.

CHAPTER XXX

MY MOTHER

THE prison destroys a man, poisoning him slowly day by day and hour by hour. Its action is like that of a swelling river in spring, when it imperceptibly carries away bit after bit of its covering of ice. The observer on its banks will only understand what has happened when the ice, which has thus been softened from the top and undermined from the bottom, suddenly breaks up with a roar and a splash, churning the whole stream into mush and foam, till the current seizes the disintegrating fields and carries them down to the all-devouring sea.

The same process of undermining the human strength goes on in prison, where man, at the critical moment, breaks up in the torrent of despair and slips down into the irresistible current that sweeps him along to an unknown deep. Will it be suicide, an explosion of hate or sheer, engulfing madness? No one knows nor can any one foretell the answer.

I remember with oppressing vividness just such a period in my own prison life, when despair fastened itself upon me and I felt with every fibre of my soul the utter uselessness of my life. All my surroundings were absolutely foreign to me and had for me a dull, yellow mantle of indifference and fatigue; while all with whom I came into contact were likewise alien, not understanding me and living lives that were equally incomprehensible from my viewpoint. Something seemed to be continually dogging my steps and whispering bad counsel to me, words that

appeared to be the dictate of a malicious and relentless Fate.

These periods obsessed me with ever-increasing frequency after the first year of prison life. I called them "yellow days" and was morbidly afraid of them, sensing their coming with terror, when from the corners of my cell and from every crevice in the floor peered out the yellow eyes of longing or stretched toward me the noisome feelers of despair.

During one of these periods of yellow days I was particularly unhappy and had the feeling that somehow I had come to the end of my endurance and my strength of will. I feared that I should go mad or lapse into an incurable melancholia. Suddenly, during the worst hours of my despair, a bright ray seemed to penetrate right into my soul, while an incomprehensible and unexpected serenity spread its influence over me. I could not understand or guess what the reason might be; I knew only that something had definitely healed and calmed me.

A week later I was called to the prison office, where I saw a woman in a black gown; but, as the light was poor, I did not recognize her as any one I knew.

"Your mother has come to see you," said the Commandant in a low voice. "I shall leave you to yourselves."

The Commandant went out, and only then did my mother give way to her mingled joy and pain at seeing her son, but seeing him in prison. But my mother was a woman of strong soul and she quickly regained possession of herself.

She had come alone from St. Petersburg, all the long road only to say good-bye to me before going away with my sister, whom the doctors had ordered abroad for a cure. My mother knew that her second child, her son, was also ill—ill of soul from longing and from struggling with his thoughts, and she consequently could not go away for an extended trip without seeing him and saying good-bye to him. She came for one day only, after having spent twelve in the train and being compelled to leave the

same night to recommence the long journey across all of Asiatic and European Russia.

I spent the whole day with her, for, owing to the leniency of the Commandant, I was allowed to take her to my cell. When she entered it, she could not master her feelings and wept with uncontrolled and deep emotion, as only mothers can weep. Finally her trembling lips formed the words :

“ And why ? Why ? ”

Ah, mother, I could not at that time explain to you why two of the best years of my life were taken from me, because I myself did not then know and did not understand. I calmed her as I could and as I best knew how.

She shared with me our prison dinner, to which I added tomatoes and other vegetables from our garden. I gave her tea and told her all about the course of the Revolution and about the life of the prisons, trying to make clear to her that this period was not without very definite profit to me, as I strove much morally and completed many pieces of work which had been held in abeyance under the pressure of normal life and might never have otherwise been finished. I showed her my new literary and scientific manuscripts and sketched to her all my plans for the future.

My mother listened to me but busied herself the whole time about my cell, making it look as attractive as she could, rearranging its simple appointments and my books and mending my garments for me. When the lamp was lighted and I saw the beloved head of my mother bent over the table, there came back before me, as in a dream, my childhood, free from pain and care, and a great sadness crept into my heart. I wanted to weep then and to ask, as my mother had :

“ And why, why all this ? ”

Mother evidently sensed the depressing thoughts that were dominating me, because she quickly raised her head, looked into my saddened face and, grasping my hands, said in a commanding, almost severe tone of voice :

"You will withstand everything, my son. You will endure . . ."

At that moment I felt that I first understood the soul of my mother, a soul proud, strong and not to be held in bondage to anything. I realized then what the captivity of our country and its oppression by Russia had given to the Polish woman. My mother as a young girl had seen the bloody times of the rising for liberty of 1863, when her father was shot down and she and her mother were forced to hide for long weeks in the forest, as the families of those who fought were hunted and persecuted by the Russian Cossacks. She saw the death of hundreds of the ill-fated insurrectionists, then watched hundreds more of these fighters for Polish liberty being manacled and driven off to banishment in Siberia; she saw the mothers, daughters and wives of insurrectionists thrashed with whips by the Cossacks. With her own fortune confiscated by the Government, she was compelled, after having been accustomed to wealth, to live through years of want and unhappiness; but, by hard work and dominating will, she managed to finish the middle and high schools and, after the few years of married life before the death of my father, she struggled on and won for herself a definite position at the head of a college which she founded and maintained for the education of our youth.

Such was the hard life, often tragic and always filled with struggle, which formed the soul of my mother. She knew that she would endure everything and put this conviction into my heart and mind just as, since childhood, she had instilled into my soul an unshakable faith in the resurrection of my country, Poland!

At about ten o'clock my mother left the prison. She blessed me; she said good-bye with a quiet smile, full of an inner strength and a strong faith; and finally she went away, calm, proud and distant.

Without any suggestion coming from me, the Commandant of the Prison escorted her himself to the station

and helped her to settle in the car for the twelve-day journey to St. Petersburg.

Oh, mother, why could you not there before God, where through this year you have prayed for your children, have read out these my memories of our meeting in the prison of the Tsar, this Tsar who killed your father and would have killed your son? With how divinely sympathetic a look would the Most Just Judge have graced you and have said :

“ Behold a mother ! ”

CHAPTER XXXI

SAINTS AND PIRATES

THE population of the prison was, generally speaking, grey and uniform, though I did at times meet some very strange types, which could never have been found in ordinary life.

I have spoken of Daria the Black, whom I met the first day of my stay in a criminal prison. Lowering, always looking on the ground, always gathering some herbs, digging at some roots or plants growing in the prison yard, always in a hurry, a person of few words—such was this poison woman.

Conveyed to the prison from a great distance, she had no visitors such as the ordinary prisoner received; but I was told that from time to time longing seized her and that then at the next full moon she would sit at the window, grinding up some herbs and stones, and would whisper :

“Come! Come!”

It was said that on the next Sunday after these incantations a gipsy woman would appear during the visitors' hour, bringing some little gifts and dainties, and would spend her whole time telling fortunes, as she read them from palms or from a pack of old, greasy cards.

During my stay in the prison one of these visits occurred. The Black Daria with her incomprehensible telegraphy called to her the gipsy woman, who squatted on the ground and told the fortunes of all the women convicts. No objection was made to this by the prison authorities, as the wives of the keepers and other prison officials wanted to profit by the advice of the sorceress. Finally the gipsy

had satisfied the curiosity of all the women prisoners save Daria, who waited beside her, as lowering and as mysterious-looking as ever. After the others had gone, the prophetess sat for a long time muttering something, then took a new pack of cards and began to tell Black Daria's fortune. Several times she reshuffled and dealt the cards, evidently incredulous and wishing to verify their pronouncement; then she turned and said to Daria:

"In a week you will be free—in a week's time!"

Daria's eyes were filled with astonishment, as she asked of the gipsy:

"I shall be free?"

"The cards say so and they are never mistaken," replied the gipsy woman, and added: "Show me your left hand."

As she said this, she drew from her pocket a small phial, washed the palm of Daria with the fluid it contained and began to examine the close network of lines that streaked it.

"Do you see," she whispered, "this is the line of torture, of suffering. One, two—seven lines cross it, which mean that from this day seven nights will pass and you will be free. Look! The line continues clearly to the little finger. In a week's time you will be free!"

The keeper on duty told me this, and, when I asked Daria, she confirmed the tale. Strange as it may seem to those of us who would like to keep the world well down on its scientific basis, within just a week a document arrived from Kazan, in which it was stated that it had been quite accidentally discovered that the crime for which Daria was being held in prison had been committed by another and that, consequently, the court ordered her release, inasmuch as the years already spent in prison covered the total of the sentences imposed upon her for her other offences. The next day Daria the Black was free.

With her departure there went out from our prison a very characteristic type of an adviser and counsellor with a great influence among women convicts. Practically every Russian prison, where there are women serving

sentences, had its Black Daria, looked upon with a certain amount of respect and a great deal of awe by the other women inmates.

As *starosta* I often met Daria and was also frequently brought into contact with another type rather common in the prisons. The special representative in this case happened to be one Shutkoff, called "the Librarian."

His biography was short and sad. He was a half-educated man, who had once been an official in some institution and had been arrested for a slight offence, which brought upon him a short term of imprisonment. The unbearably hard life behind the bars and his shame and longing drove him to attempt escape. Recaptured, he was committed for three years, only to escape again and receive an additional penalty of three years more, with the result that Shutkoff, an ordinarily quiet and modest man, became a confirmed inmate of the prisons. In spite of the usual effects upon most men put behind the bars, Shutkoff remained quiet and modest-mannered and developed an almost insane mania for reading.

For whole days at a time he remained in the prison library, reading all sorts of books, magazines and old newspapers and at regular intervals rearranging the shelves according to his ever-changing systems. One day he would place the books according to their subjects, the next he would order them all about and have them line up according to their heights or to the colours of their bindings and, on the following day, he would judge them according to their thickness. As he was captured and recaptured in different towns and had served his sentences in various places, he knew the libraries of several institutions and had rearranged all of them. He was everywhere well known and liked for his amiable, quiet disposition, for his serviceableness and for his good character. He wrote the prisoners' letters, completed his own memoirs, and, in addition, composed love-sonnets and a tragedy in ten acts, which was destined to outshine Shakespeare. The

authorities always looked upon him with a feeling of real sympathy and respect ; and when he returned, after one escape, in the custody of soldiers and police, the keepers would smile a friendly welcome and say to him :

" Again you have come to pay us a visit, Mr. Shutkoff ! Without you the library has fallen into sad disorder."

" Oh, Lord ! " the Librarian would sigh with a show of importance and, as soon as he was duly enrolled in the prison office, go right off to begin his literary work.

He knew a mass of titles of books and had a quantity of notions of various sciences terribly jumbled together. He was very proud of all his learning, going so far at times as to air theories of his own creation, which were unique and preposterous. But he never quarrelled and, when he met any one more learned than himself, he simply went away as though offended and always thereafter avoided him.

I knew from time to time several of these librarians and looked upon them as monomaniacs produced by the prison life, and I often wondered why these good and harmless fools were kept within its walls. It was even a matter of record that one of these librarians, when caught by the police after an escape, was taken to their office, watched the record being written up and was then told :

" You see, you have been caught again. Please go to the prison and present this document. Yes, it is hard, but such is the law."

The story runs that the librarian took the order for his imprisonment in his hand, smiled timidly, bowed and went away. After he had looked in all the shop windows on his way across the whole town, he turned up at the prison, presented his documents entitling him to a place and went off to the library, from where one fair day he again fled, only to meet the inevitable fate of recapture and reincarceration among the books.

The librarians are always attracted by religious people and religious matters, to all of which Shutkoff was no exception. His two intimate friends were Grushko and

Nikoloff. They always walked together, discussing in low, earnest voices the most serious questions of faith and doctrine; and, though it afterwards came out that they were men of different views, they never quarrelled but seemed always most tolerant of one another's opinion. Evidently their discussions dealt with principles from an academic standpoint in a manner that is not frequently found even among highly educated people without the prison walls; and their talks seemed always polite and full of mutual respect.

One day, when those of us in the political wing of the prison sat drinking tea and enjoying a few strawberries we had gathered from our own bed, the Commandant of the Prison came along and asked us if we would care to go into town for church the following Sunday, inasmuch as Shutkoff and Grushko had begged for this privilege and as he could, under authority received from the Prosecutor, allow others of us to go out under guard with them to the service. Two of my companions profited by this opportunity to get away from the prison for a while and joined the Sunday morning party that marched off to church.

It was not until two o'clock, when the Commandant had already begun to feel some anxiety about them, that they finally returned and then with all of them save the political prisoners and Grushko—that is, Shutkoff, two other prisoners and the soldiers—drunk. My companions explained the state of the others by saying that, when they were all leaving the church, they were surrounded by a crowd of men and women, who frequently murmured, "The poor fellows!" and finally went off and brought them back rolls, cakes, sausages and eggs, and then plied them with vodka, which the soldiers of the guard could not refuse. Of all of them only Grushko, a venerable-looking old man with a long white beard, resisted the pressure of hospitality and did not drink anything.

After their return it seemed as though Shutkoff and his friends had imbibed so much of the powerful alcohol that

the vapours overcame all the men living in the same room with him and even some of those on another floor. When, in the course of this poisoning process, several serious rows and even fights took place, the authorities ordered a search throughout all the building, in the belief that some one had thrown a keg of vodka over the wall, which the prisoners had managed to pick up without the notice of the guard. But, as generally happened, nothing was found, and matters gradually quieted down to their usual monotonous course.

The following Sunday the same thing occurred and repeated itself for three consecutive weeks. However, on this last occasion the pious convicts, on their return from the church, were sidetracked into the prison office and carefully searched, as a result of which the privilege of religious worship was withdrawn and the mystery of the incredibly potent influence of the alcohol fumes in the prison satisfactorily cleared up. Among the pious was found a vodka smuggler and this was none other than—the venerable Grushko! When ordered to undress, he was exceedingly troubled but failed to prevent the authorities from imposing upon him this indignity. When his prison clothes were off, they found a good-sized, pliant rubber tube filled with vodka wound round his body.

Once uncovered, the old man made a clean breast of it all. While the convicts and their guard were being treated outside the church, the organizers of this hospitable demonstration cleverly managed to fill up Grushko's supply reservoir with the strongest of spirits, which he afterwards diluted and sold on his return to the prison for a very handsome profit to them all. Of course, after this unmasking of the religious pilgrimages, the drinking was ended, and Grushko remained for a long time in the underground cell doing a compulsory penance.

Another of these friends of the librarian, Michel Nikoloff, had been condemned to two years of imprisonment for vagrancy and for a persistent habit of changing his name

and documents. Tall of stature, thin, already far from young, he walked with a stoop and was always wrapped in thought. His face was sharp and emaciated, and had its far from agreeable characteristics thrown into high contrast by a pair of large, pensive black eyes. He spoke slowly in a deep bass voice and never smiled. This quiet, wise man was never in any one's way and attracted no attention.

One could only wonder at the incomprehensible provisions of the Russian law, which dealt out prison punishment for such men as Nikoloff, a type which could, alas, be frequently met in Russia, where the immense spaces, the admixture of Mongolian nomad blood and the discontent with the physical conditions of existence combined to develop in the people a form of psychic deviation which found its expression in the love of moving, of wandering about with the nomads' disregard of the stereotyped and the material, of tramping, if you will. As the police never allowed people to travel about too frequently from one place to another without some acceptable reason, these nomads of to-day had frequently to change their names and to appear with new documents at short intervals, often using the papers of some companion of the road who had passed away and naturally being caught in the occasional necessity of having to prove that he was not dead, as the records showed.

In what way did these tramps exist? They lived as the birds, by picking up what they could. The Russian peasants called them "passing men" or "passengers" and never refused them hospitality and food, for which the passing men always paid in some form of work, as practically all of them knew tailoring, boot-making or doctoring. Those of the medical profession undertook the cure of all ills through miraculous means, with whisperings, incantations, magic herbs and sorcerer's formulas, which they acquired from the gipsies as the relics of banished centuries.

I learned quite accidentally what sort of a man Nikoloff

was one day when he came into the wash-room with two other convicts while I was there. Without paying any attention to me, he continued the conversation he had evidently begun in the cell.

"To pray is a good thing, but every prayer does not reach God—not every one, oh no!"

"Tell us how," came in an earnest voice from one of his companions, a man with a pale, emaciated face and sad, appealing eyes.

Nikoloff lighted the candle in the lantern hanging in the middle of the room, for it was already twilight, and began speaking in his slow, deep voice.

"If it is difficult for you to pray, your thoughts cannot follow closely the meaning of the words, and you will be repeating them without understanding. And such a prayer is worth nothing, for it will be caught on its way to Heaven by the devil, who, supported by his black hosts, lays in wait for us everywhere, even in church. One must know how to pray. The prayer must have such strength that each word of it will burn into the mind and heart; each word must be sent forth not only by the lips but by every fibre of the body, by every drop of blood, by every sigh. Only we really know how to pray, only we. I shall teach you . . . but do not disclose the secret!"

He stopped and came over to me, bent low and began to whisper:

"*Starosta*, you understand the torture and the longing of men living here. Everything that one can give them of consolation or relief will be a commendable act, agreeable unto God. Do not be astonished, *Starosta*, and tell no one of what you are about to see."

"Very well," I answered.

Then Nikoloff drew from his breast a bronze cross on a little chain, hung it on the wall and, crossing himself many times, knelt, touched the floor with his forehead, rose and repeated the same movements again and again, making

each quicker than the last. Through it all he muttered in supplication only one sentence :

"Christ be merciful unto us !"

The convicts stood by like two immovable statues, with their eyes riveted upon him and their lips moving inaudibly. Nikoloff's face grew even paler, his mouth was open, he breathed with a whistling sound and his eyes were larger than ever. Finally he sprang to his feet, ran to the middle of the room and, continually repeating these same words, began making circles, ever smaller and smaller, until he was whirling in one spot with such speed that I saw two faces and four hands in the glimmering light. But he still continued so to increase his speed that he became but a shadow, almost transparent, and finally melted away in the darkness that his own twirling had produced by extinguishing the candle. In a second I heard the thud of a falling body and ordered the convicts to relight the lamp, while I busied myself about Nikoloff, who lay unconscious on the floor.

His eyes were open and staring, foam encircled his mouth, his breast heaved with a rattling sound and he was still repeating, in a hoarse and almost inaudible voice :

"Christ be merciful unto us !"

After some minutes Nikoloff was once more seated on the bench, able, though breathing heavily, to go on with his exhortation.

"In such manner ought one to pray, only thus ! Then you will hear your prayers fall at the feet of the Creator, like the low rustling of sweet-scented flowers. . . . We know this ; yet we also know that in the noise of day, in the bustle of life among untutored men, one cannot pray in such a way. Consequently, we flee from men, we hide at night in solitary houses or in the homes of the enlightened and there we pray. . . ."

Then I realized what this old man really was, so evidently mysterious in the eyes of all who came in contact with him. He belonged to a sect known in the Orthodox Church as

the "whirling ones." This sect originally came from Byzantium and was in all likelihood of the same extraction as the Whirling Dervishes of the Islamic faith, whom I have run across in the Crimea, at Trebizond in Turkish Asia Minor and in the northern part of Persia in the mosques between Resht and Teheran.

In this same stone sack I met another one of these many prison acquaintances whose lives were permeated with suffering and despair, the old convict, Maxim Suvoroff. He was always silent, and I never knew just why it was that he came up to the fence one day and began to talk with me, speaking in a mysterious sort of voice that searched the heart and seemed to indicate some strong inner urge for expression.

"To-day, sir, is a terrible day for me, for it is the anniversary of my crime. It is an old story, now that I have been twelve years in prison. Twelve years! Is it not a long time?"

I was silent, afraid of diverting the course of his thoughts. After a moment he continued:

"You are young, sir, and you cannot remember back to those times when long caravans of sledges, laden with tea and silk, trekked slowly across the vast Siberian stretches of snow. We drove them from Kiakhta to Irkutsk, where the principal custom-house and the largest depots of the leading firms were located. Each driver, or *yamstchik*, had two sledges to look out for; and I have sometimes seen a caravan of five hundred of these sledges, which thus counted two hundred and fifty men. The life was hard, for we travelled day and night, sleeping on the sledges and freezing to the marrow during the terrible cold of the blizzards and the raging north-west winds. We stopped from time to time to rest and feed the horses and took turns in guarding the caravan, as we carried valuable cargo and knew that there were always bands of men along the route who valued it as highly as we did.

"The peasants of the villages along the way followed

an occupation which they euphemistically called 'the white one.' Clad all in white, these countrymen would lie in the snow, where their disguise was complete, and during the night, when a caravan stopped to rest, they would crawl up and cut the ropes holding the tea and silk on the sledges. When the drivers started again, sleepy and not knowing that their loads had been tampered with, they pushed forward as usual, until some following sleigh discovered that one ahead was sowing a very lucrative crop for these peasants along the way."

Suvoroff lighted a cigarette and was lost for a while in thought; then he continued his tale.

"I must go back to earlier days. Besides myself my parents had a second son, Gregory, who enlisted in the army but did not come back after his term of service was finished. We learned later that he had married and was living in the Transbaikal.

"On one of my trips I was bringing up the rear of the caravan. As the night was dark, I kept continually looking back, for I was afraid of a robber attack. Suddenly I heard a sound and, looking round, saw a white shadow rise up behind my last sledge and disappear at once. When my companions ran back to me in answer to my shout for help, we investigated the sledge and found that a rope was cut and one bale of silk gone. As we had passed through a large village only an hour earlier, we felt fairly certain that its peasants had made an ambush for us and consequently decided to punish them. With our force of nearly two hundred strong and well-trained men, we carried out our intentions in a way that the village must have long remembered.

"When the police arrested us and our trial was on, we learned that eleven of the peasants had been killed during our raid and among them one Gregory Suvoroff. I asked to be shown the body of this man and recognized my own brother. On that day I made up my mind to spend a large part of my remaining life in prison as a penance to win

God's pardon for my crime. Though the tribunal condemned us to only a year's confinement, in view of the fact that we were under the necessity of protecting our caravans from these frequent robberies, I have succeeded, by repeated escapes and open rebellion against the authorities, in having my term extended to twelve years and have still another three left to round out the period of fifteen which I decided should be the length of my punishment. To-day is the anniversary of my brother's death, and perhaps—who knows?—it was my own hand that killed him."

Once more the prison turned before me a page of its martyrs' book and enabled me to look into the depths of another human soul, which is man's own most severe judge. How many such pages from the terrible book of human misery, almost unknown to any save those who had made the record, I could read in the prison!

Once in the evening, during a lecture to the convicts, I remarked that a group of them sitting in one corner were listening very attentively, not to me, however, but to the whispered words of a gaunt, sunburned man with an unusually expressive face. When I asked them rather pointedly if I was not disturbing them, they showed evident signs of being ashamed, and one of them soon came up to me and explained:

"Don't be angry, *Starosta*; but this new prisoner, the Pike, relates very curious things and, as he will be again transferred to-morrow, we wanted to hear all he has to tell, for it can be of great use to such birds as we. Come and hear what he has to say, *Starosta*. It is all very curious."

There was nothing for it but that I should close my lecture and ask the Pike to speak loud enough for the whole room to hear, giving us first a short summary of what he had already told the little group in the corner. At that the Pike came to the middle of the room, took the chair and very fluently and picturesquely began his tale

"We had been living for a long time in Kamchatka in a little village of fishermen and hunters, located on the coast. We busied ourselves catching herring and salmon and hunting seals and whales. We were fairly well off, but not from the returns of our sea industries, for, although these gave us some profits, the work was very difficult and our boats were inferior to those of the Americans from Alaska and of the Japanese from Hokkaido and Hondo.

"But it came about thus. Once we were working back south along the coast, when the breeze was so light that it hardly filled our sails and we were laboriously pulling along with our oars. Our boats were very heavy with a full catch of herring. All at once my father spied a hayrick on the shore. This astonished him, inasmuch as the nearest village was over fifty miles away, and induced us to land and have a look.

"As we approached the hayrick, some Japanese ran from behind it, took a good look at us and began to shoot. We were fifteen in all and, as soon as everybody was on shore, the battle began. Seeing our larger force, the Japanese soon retreated into the forests, and we began to investigate the hayrick. We found that they had a schooner drawn up on the beach and had disguised it with this covering. It turned out to be a veritable treasure-house, containing a cargo of the finest sealskins from the Commander Islands and of the black fox and sables, which the Japanese had collected from the natives in return for alcohol, tobacco and powder.

"This was the beginning of our real fortune and it enabled us to buy two big schooners, with which to start hunting on the seas in quite a different manner from that we had been following before. We cruised both the Behring and the Okhotsk Sea but not to hunt for whales and seals nor to fish for herring and salmon. Our two well-armed schooners went far out under Japanese colours. When the Japanese pirates, smugglers and illicit traders took

us for associates and approached us, we threw off our masks and attacked them, taking from them all the articles they illegally exported from Russia as well as all the alcohol they smuggled in to inebriate and poison the peaceable, stupid natives of Kamchatka.

"It was an excellent business, comrades, with plenty of interest and good profit and without very great risks, as the ocean swallowed up all traces of battle and of our activities. Of course, at times a Japanese bullet or two found its way home or one of us went overboard in the scrimmage and disappeared, but such must always be reckoned with as the cost of the trade and, when one is busy in such a profitable undertaking, one must also take some little risks with the easy gains. Bear this always in mind, comrades, that one can live tranquilly on the shores of Kamchatka and can always find an easy existence. Try to get there, for bold, strong men are always in demand. I remember a fugitive who came to us from Sakhalin—but I reckon it would be better not to speak of this, for that affair was my business only."

"Go ahead and tell us, comrade. Please tell us!" came from different parts of the room. I noticed the Pike paled a bit, as he sat thinking, and suddenly lost all of his levity of manner.

"Well," he continued after a moment more, "he came and he was not alone, for he brought a young woman with him. The two of them had made the journey in a small open boat across the Okhotsk and had worked along the shore until they came to our village. They were both bold and strong, and during the whole summer the man sailed with us. He was an excellent shot and had no equal in using a knife; but, as ill fate would have it, he was hit during one of our fights and afterwards died. The woman was in despair for a long time, during which I consoled her as best I could. Then I fell in love with her and married her. We sailed the sea together on our expeditions, and no man was as happy as I. For me the

sun never set during these days, the smile never left my face and the joy in my heart sang an endless song. I thanked God for each new day of life.

"It was this way for four years, until one day a young trader came to our village. He bought all our spoils from us and took them to Vladivostok. My wife took his fancy, and it was evident that he had also found a way to her heart. I noticed, when we were at sea, that she sighed sometimes and at night even wept. On our return from one of our trips, she disappeared from the village the very first night. I understood at once and started right out for the trader's establishment, only to be told there that he had gone for good. However, I verified my suspicion that his schooner had not left and saw plainly that they had fled on horseback. I followed them and . . ."

Suddenly the Pike gave a frightful cry, fell on the floor and began to writhe with sobs and wails. It was only with difficulty that he was restored to consciousness in the prison hospital. It was plain to all of us that there had risen before the eyes of the pirate a picture of the events which occurred when he overtook the unfaithful wife and the young merchant, who had extinguished the sun of his life and had killed the joy in his heart.

CHAPTER XXXII

A WHIRLWIND IN THE DUST

"H AVEN'T you heard what happened, *Starosta*?" asked the convict servant who was working in the political wing, as he entered my cell one morning.

"Last night three new prisoners arrived and were put in the cell with the Ivans, who started, as is their wont, to beat and rob them. They thrashed two of them, but the third one gave them all such a licking that scarcely any one is able to get up this morning. He went through the room like a whirlwind."

"And what about him?" I asked, remembering my first prison talk with Mironoff.

"He is sitting there on his bench whistling and telling such funny stories that the Ivans are roaring with laughter over him."

After dinner I went along to see the new arrival, so graphically described by my prisoner servant. I found the stranger seated in the chair and regaling his hearers in a quiet, melodious voice with such yarns that they were beside themselves with laughter. He was of enormous height, broad-shouldered, slightly stooping and had a chest as big and round as a church dome. He was just in the act of recounting the amusing story of how he had happened to land in prison.

"Back home in Poland I heard that railroad workers were well paid in Siberia and consequently started out for this part of the world. After a while I began putting aside some money and allowed myself to dream about buying a piece of land for my old parents and of living

there with them myself. I am a locksmith and consequently, with this desire to get ahead, I worked in the town during my hours away from the railway shops and did everything I could to increase my earnings.

"One Sunday I went to the station to see the express go through. When it pulled up, an elegantly dressed gentleman got out of the first-class carriage, looked round a bit and then came up to me. He asked me what I was doing and, hearing that I worked here and had a house, he seemed very pleased and begged me to take care of a valise for a friend of his, who would call and claim it. He warned me to observe great caution and gave me twenty-five roubles for my help to him. I felt terribly lucky, took the valise home and afterwards surrendered it to another gentleman who called for it. This repeated itself several times a week and brought me fine profits, but I give you the word of an honest convict that I did not even suspect what was going on.

"However, a few months later I understood it all with painful clearness. The revelation came one night when the police and the gendarmes invaded my place, searched everywhere and found the valise, which had only that day been given in trust to me, and in it articles which they said had been stolen. I was arrested and, though I defended myself as vigorously as I could before the tribunal, I was convicted and sentenced to half a year in prison. I could not bring myself to tolerate such an injustice, as I was entirely ignorant of the fact that thieves had made a hiding-place of my lodging; yet all my petitions and protests, which I presented, proved of absolutely no avail. Then I decided to fly away. I climbed the wall but had the misfortune to meet a patrol. I fought with the soldiers, killed one and badly wounded a second, following which I was condemned to a term of eight years."

"Yes, it is often so," one of the other prisoners sadly observed.

"Yes, but it ought not to be so," exclaimed the Pole

heatedly, as he rose and straightened his bulky shoulders. "I never can reconcile myself to this and never shall. How many times have I escaped and how many men have I killed—and for what reason? Just because of a strange coincidence and the injustice and indifference of the judges."

I made the acquaintance of the new inmate of the prison. His name was Thomas Wierzbicki; he was of superhuman strength but of childlike *naïveté* and gentleness. Through our long talks I discovered a deep despair in this great hulk of a body with its disingenuous soul, a despair that could easily turn itself into madness.

"It is of no moment whether I was condemned for six months or eight years; it matters only that, when the prison door was closed behind me, I was deprived of the respect of other men. My old parents wept when they learned what had happened; but they have not pardoned me, forgetting me instead as though I were no more among the living. Oh, sir, the Russian tribunal murdered my soul. Do you understand what this means? A pure and honest soul. Can I forgive them? Never! Never!"

As he said this, he struck the table so loudly that the other prisoners thought he was about to deal with me as he had with them and some even started to come to my aid. But the giant, after this explosion, moved over closer to me and began to weep.

"They wronged him," muttered Boitsoff, and continued with a sigh: "He will remain for ever a real prisoner and will show them something."

I also made the acquaintance of the other prisoners who had been brought in with Wierzbicki. One of them was called Barabash and was a young, intelligent, good-looking man with black hair and eyes and a dark complexion that gave him the appearance of a creole. After the first hostile contact with his future prison companions, when the old Ivans had beaten and robbed him, Barabash was always in a state of fear, trembling at the slightest disturbance and nervously looking around like a trapped beast.

What was it that shoved this poor man behind the prison bars? His was a short, simple and sad story. He worked as a clerk in a bank, where, during an investigation, it was found that a sum in one of the books was erased and corrected and eleven roubles were missing in the cash. Before the examining magistrate Barabash swore that he never took the money, but this protestation was not enough to clear him. He was committed to prison to await trial and was not allowed any privilege of leaving until his case had been decided.

I really never knew whether Barabash did or did not take these eleven roubles, which proved so tragic for him; but I listened to his insistent oaths that he never stole them and later I witnessed his continuous fright of his surroundings, his burning, scorching shame, his sufferings and finally his death in prison. At his tragic end I had the impression that I saw these eleven tinkling silver coins, red with blood, and that in their jingle I heard the words "A crime, a crime!"—but the coins never disclosed who was really the criminal.

All this time that Barabash waited for his trial until death released him, the examining magistrate was in no hurry to bring the matter to court, as no one in Russia ever gave a thought to the sufferings of the human dust.

The third one of this group was a simple, illiterate peasant, with a long beard and with matted hair coming down over his forehead. He had also a leather strap fastened around his head, which made me take him for a village cobbler, an inference that was proved to be quite correct. I never learned what tumbled him into the stone bag. Perhaps when in his cups or in a fit of jealousy he had made too free a use of his short, sharp knife, with which he trimmed the leather for the village boots. I never found out and could only surmise. He was a morose individual, always deeply immersed in his own depressing thoughts, rather old, unalterably serious and usually quiet.

When I made bold to speak to him one day and to advise him to go for a walk, as I had observed that he never moved from his bench, he only shook his head and grunted :

"Leave me in peace. Nothing will help or hurt me any more, for I am doomed to die."

"Is it possible?" I exclaimed, knowing that he was still awaiting trial.

"A fortune teller," he answered with profound conviction, "told me that I was to die in sixty-three days. Of these I have only thirty left to live—then the end!" He sighed deeply, turned his face to the wall and was silent once more. The gentleman was certainly not what one would call sociable or talkative; still I understood his serious mood, as he was discounting each passing day and listening with acutely sharpened ears for the rattling approach of the dreaded reaper.

One day during the exercise hour some of the keepers and the Vice-Commandant entered the pen of the criminal prisoners and began looking over the men, as they were prosecuting a search for some papers which had been stolen from the prison office. Coming up to Wierzbicki, one of the keepers said to him :

"All right, you undress!"

"Please speak politely to me. I am not a beast but a man, and a man ought to be shown respect," the Pole answered and showed signs of emotion in his face.

"You will preach to me, you gallows bird? Undress at once."

"I will not undress," Wierzbicki replied in sharply cut, deliberate syllables. "I never was a thief and I shall not allow any one to dishonour me a second time. Do you hear?"

"Undress and search him!" shouted the Vice-Commandant.

The keepers made at Wierzbicki, but he took post in the corner of the cage and defended himself as a boar

attacked by hounds. In a very short time the keepers were so roughly handled that they had to draw off and call for help. As some others ran out from the office and soldiers appeared from their quarters with their carbines, Wierzbicki shouted :

“Comrades, enough of silence and humility ! Our silence only strengthens their injustice ; our humility is worse than ignominy. We will not allow these men to torture us, comrades ! ”

Quite unexpectedly these words fell like a spark in a case of powder. With a dull, menacing roar the convicts made for the fence of the cage and began to strip off the broad pickets, while others grabbed up stones and broken brick. In a moment the fight was on. With the battering blows from the heavy boards and the fusillade of flying missiles, the keepers were soon forced back out of the cage. Hearing the uproar, the Commandant emerged and, sensing at once the full significance of the threatening situation, made a sign with his hand. The keepers fled at once from the yard to within the walls of the building, and the soldiers, gathered near the office entrance, fired a volley that swept the pen.

Barabash, running across the cage in wild fright, gave a despairing cry, crumpled up and rose no more. Wierzbicki went down like a felled oak, with his arms spread as its great, strong branches. With an unfinished curse on his lips the cobbler also dropped on his back and cheated both the tribunal and his gipsy prophet. Some wounded convicts, limping and covered with blood, sought shelter behind a pile of broken bricks in one corner of the cage, while others continued to hurl stones and pieces of wood at the soldiers. After a second volley, fired in the air, things calmed down. One by one the convicts were led out of the cage, chained and taken away into the cells.

In the ominous silence that followed the keepers carried out the bodies of the killed ; and then the law authorities

arrived, made their investigation and went away, leaving behind them new tortures and vexations for the human dust, which this time nearly succeeded in streaming out of the stone sack, into which it had been rammed for misery and suffering.

CHAPTER XXXIII

OUT OF THE STONE SACK

IN the course of my prison peregrinations I was finally taken back to Harbin, where I found many old acquaintances and everything unchanged. My prison companions had cared for my vegetables and flowers, the tomatoes and brilliant asters giving me a special welcome back to my first criminal prison.

Only the aquarium had been neglected. The water had evaporated and left a deposit of thick mud at the bottom. The tortoises had fled, but no one knew when or where. When cleaning out the concrete bowl, I found the mud so stiff for my wooden shovel that I brought a bucket of water or two to help me in loosening the mass at the bottom. After a time, when the mud was well moistened and I began again to dig with my shovel, I was astonished and could hardly believe my eyes at seeing in the deeper and more moist layers of the earth little crustaceans and carp flap out of the soil and begin swimming round in the muddy water. They were some of the very ones which I had put into the aquarium and for whose rescue I returned just in time, since a few days more would have dried up their remaining moisture and taken life away.

I had only one week left to remain in prison! A strange unrest took possession of me, growing with each passing day. Was it joy? Was it impatience to be free? I never was quite sure of it, for I could not analyse this feeling which obsessed me. It was perhaps anxiety, or even fear, that I was experiencing at going back into the struggle of ordinary life after an interruption of nearly

two years, a period which until this very day hangs over me like a cloud of gloom. I wondered with something approaching to terror how I should ever live once more among men, after I had seen down into such abysses of torture and misery. I looked upon everything in another way, in another light, feeling more acutely, understanding phenomena more quickly and more deeply.

The day of September 23rd, 1907, finally dawned! At eight in the morning the Commandant of the Prison entered my cell and told me that I was free. I made the round of the rooms, taking leave of all my acquaintances. The convicts in silence shook my hand and looked at me with varying expressions of emotion, but in none of their eyes was there any sign of jealousy, positively none.

At the very last I said good-bye to those of my associates in the Revolutionary Government who still remained in prison, and then turned toward the prison door, which already stood open for me to pass. Just before going out, I turned back once more to take a last glance around the yard, and there at all the windows I saw the pallid faces of the convicts looking down at me with unmistakable feeling and good will.

The wicket in the door was closed with a bang behind me, yet it did not drown the sound of the revolutionary song which came from the lips of the political prisoners:

"You are the victims of our struggle for the right,
For the liberty, the glory and the honour of the nation.
Weep not then, brothers, who have led us in the fight,
In this hour of eternal and most cruel separation."

A crowd of friends awaited me in front of the prison entrance and soon changed my mood with their greetings and congratulations. One of the men presented me with a beautiful travelling case and in it an address, citing my services during the Revolution and carrying the signatures of some six thousand persons of all grades of society in the population of the Far East.

But life's drama will always have its antithesis—and one came now to give me a most uncomfortable moment, when a police officer stepped up and handed me a document from the Prosecutor, informing me that I had just three days' time in which to liquidate my affairs and leave the territory of the Far East.

Within the given time I was already aboard the train and on my way to St. Petersburg. Once more I was alone, as I was surrounded by those who knew nothing of my life and with whom I felt little inclination to converse about these matters which were filling my soul. I could not understand how they could laugh so carelessly, jest and busy themselves with such trivial matters as they did. I felt that I had come up out of another world and that this darker cosmos had left an ineradicable trace in my soul.

Before my eyes passed the faces of Wierzbicki, Mironoff, the Eagle, Lapin, Barabash and my comrades in the political section. Like a moving picture there glided across the screen of memory a long film of presentations of the bloody, fatally dramatic or touching events of my prison life, each as clear as a tear—the prisoners in movement, in action, with burning or brimming eyes; the disgusting *parashas*; soldiers on guard; the grey walls of my cell and the barred windows; the keepers pacing the corridors and gazing in through the wickets in the doors. I even heard distinct sounds of life, awakening strong reminiscences—the rattle of cut bars; the clinking of chains; the soft muffled sound of the earth being dug in the tunnel; dull cries of pain, of hate or of supplication; the echoes of fights and of shots.

When, astonished and frightened with the reality of it all, I came back to myself and looked around, I realized that the panorama of the open country was passing before my car window and that out of the rumble of wheels and the booming of the speeding train my memory had, without will of mine, made these other sounds and pictures,

heard and seen so many times during that life in the desert of human dust which was dominating all my conscious and subconscious moods.

I began to think again about those who remained within the sack and about those who had passed before my eyes during these twenty lost months. What had they left in my memory, the memory of a normal, trained man who sought to understand everything, to see the least ray of light in the souls of these men, every throb of feeling that likened them to those who had never heard a prison door clang behind them and the long-drawn cries of the guards, as they shouted their "Take care, take care!"

During my journey across the continent I thought often and much about the Russians. Now I had seen them not only in the whirlpool of life in great cities, at liberty, where many surrounding and moulding circumstances compelled them to be like the men of other nations; but also I had looked upon their naked souls without artificial coverings. I had seen them in torture and in suffering, without mask or decorations which hide characteristics so intimately close to them, so innate as to be impossible of perception in the ordinary contacts of everyday life.

I feel that the Russian is the most tragic type in the world. He is born with his terrible malady, a melancholy which, though at times unsensed, always poisons and weakens his soul. From the very moment of his birth he seems to feel the heavy burden of the decrees of Fate.

The Russian psychology reveals itself clearly in three of their proverbs and expressions. One of these very old Russian proverbs runs:

"Never say that you will not be a beggar nor a criminal convict."

A real Russian, when asked how life goes with him, will never answer "Good" or "Bad," but only "*Nichevo*," which translates literally as "Nothing" but really conveys the meaning of "Oh, just middling" or "Nothing out of the ordinary worth mentioning." It signifies that his

life is neither good nor bad and conveys the idea that all goes well with him. If he acknowledged that it was well, his overpowering superstition would make him fear some form of retributory punishment on the morrow; whereas, if he stated that it was bad, he would be acknowledging his suffering and thus be fastening this state upon himself. If it is just "*Nichevo*," he experiences no feeling of suffering nor of fear. For this he is thankful to God, to whom he always turns in his short and simple prayers, not as a son to his Father or as a servant to his Master, but as a slave to an omnipotent tyrant.

And what is better than "*Nichevo*" for a slave who has no hope of liberty, neither at any time nor at any price, but fears only some new oppression? When he feels no fear, when it is absent, then all is "*Nichevo*," and this is happiness.

During these ruminations in the train I recalled again the philosophy of a convict which I referred to once before.

"Never despair, because to-morrow is always better than to-day. If to-day life is grim and hard to endure, then the severer trials of the morrow will not be felt so acutely, as one has already become accustomed to suffering. And when bad days shall last for a long time, your whole being will finally yearn for death, so that what is usually looked upon as the most terrible end of everything will come to be, instead of the worst that can happen to you, something to be desired. Also, when a bad day is followed by a little improvement in the morrow, then you will be quite happy with the change for the better. To-morrow is always better than to-day!"

Of course, to men of action and of a fighting spirit this is a slave psychology, the blind guiding power of a slave advancing along the road of life without a will and without ambition, entirely dominated by this force of Fate. For the ordinary Russian, in the grinding conditions of his existence under the governmental systems

he has known, this slave psychology is, however paradoxical it may seem in this context, really a saving code of life.

The third national expression referred to is that frequently used word "*Avos*," which is so difficult to translate.

"Will you have time to get your hay into the barn before the rain?" you ask a Russian peasant.

"*Avos*," he will answer and will mean something akin to "Perhaps." But this nearest English equivalent indicates, after all, the existence of some real reasons which may exert a good or bad influence upon the work in hand. When one says "Perhaps," the mind takes into consideration all the possibilities, both material and psychological; but *Avos* carries a significance of something fatal, full of a profound and almost terrible mystery, something like Karma or personified avenging Fate. *Avos* serves as a sort of incantation before the evil spirits, a formula expressing the complete dependence of man upon the will of unknown and hostile powers.

It is perhaps possible that the changeableness and indecision in the Russian attitude toward life are traceable to these traditional and all-permeating national formulas. Why should they make efforts of mind or body in the fight for an ideal, when Fate will sooner or later do exactly what has been ordained and cannot be changed by human influence?

Beside possessing the peculiarities of a special and abnormal psychology, social and personal, the tragic Russian is a man very easily affected by external influences. I met this type in all the criminal Ivans as well as in all the lesser and more accidental inhabitants of the prisons. His dreamy soul is sometimes uplifted, and then it can be beautiful, but none the less terrible withal. A word pronounced at the right moment can flood it with an emotion as quiet and peaceful as the calm of an autumn evening, or fire it with a burning flame that will touch with crimson everything around.

The soul of the Russian is too little known. Through

centuries this soul has yearned for expression and for understanding, for an understanding that was not given it by the Varangians, those first rulers of ancient Russia who came down from the north, nor by the Tartars, who for three hundred years held their foot upon the neck of the Muscovites. Nor was this understanding given it by the Tsars of semi-foreign extraction; neither by the Russian cultured classes, which were foreign and often even hostile to the real nation ever living in the clouds of old times, customs, faith and ideals. The Soviet leaders also have not given this understanding, they who woke and duped the Russian soul with words pointing to liberty, only to shackle Russia even the more strongly with the chains of illegality and to deprive the nation of its last glimpse of hope, its faith in God, and to push it over the brink into the pit of hellish torture, the story of which is the most tragic page in the annals of humanity down through all the long centuries of recorded history.

Taken under the fostering care of wisdom and honesty, the Russian soul could certainly produce treasures of sacrifice and idealism; but, left to itself, it tends to turn criminal, its crimes resulting from its despair and the indescribable longing after something which it does not know itself and cannot visualize. This fact was very graphically demonstrated by the Ivans of the prison, in whom I saw fellow-men led and dominated by those two evil guides, suffering and despair.

Throughout the whole of my homeward journey across the wide continents of Asia and Europe I spent practically all my hours in such ruminations and especially in assembling and marshalling the more dramatic events of my prison life, with the purpose of founding upon them a romance with which I hoped to reach the hearts of thinking Russians and through them win for the mass of prisoners still left in the stone bags some amelioration of their lot. But, although I planned and resolved to execute this work immediately upon my arrival in St.

Petersburg, it was really three years before I could batter down the continuing persecutions of the Government and gain for myself stable enough conditions to give me the necessary leisure and mental freedom to complete the work.

However, I have rushed ahead now to speak about experiences which came to me three years after my return to the capital of the Tsars, who had punished me and my forbears before me, because we would not accept and carry their foreign yoke in silence. These three years before the appearance of my romance on the prison life were crowded with many trying events and struggles, to some of which I would refer for a moment to round out the story of this period of my life.

On approaching the capital, I looked forward to finding many of the acquaintances and close friends whom I had made during my university life in the city, and especially to seeing my mother again; but I learned immediately after my arrival that she was away in the Urals with my sister and was seriously ill and weak.

As the two years of revolution and prison life, during which I had paid continuously for food that was brought in to me, had nearly exhausted the money I had previously saved, there was nothing for me at the outset but to look about sharply for some means of earning my livelihood. I took up my abode with my old teacher and friend, Professor Stanislaw Zaleski, who gave me a most hearty and cordial welcome. I soon learned that the position of assistant professor of technical chemistry in the Institute for Architectural Engineers was vacant and that the post was to be filled by competitive examination. Out of the eleven candidates who presented themselves, the Institute, basing their decision upon the scientific works offered by us competitors, selected two, of whom I was one.

After this I had only to deliver three lectures before the selecting board should make their decision. Following these lectures a finding in my favour was brought in and

a report sent by the Institute to the Minister of Public Instruction. Here the first sample of what I had to expect from officialdom greeted me and shook my spirit; for, knowing my record, he refused his confirmation and thus blocked my appointment.

Again I set about searching for work. I tried everywhere but was always informed that, however glad they might be to have me, the fact that I had been a political prisoner made it impossible. In the meantime my money was dwindling, so that I very distinctly saw the poorly covered bottom of my little sack. The efforts and recommendations of Professor Zaleski and of the Board of the High Polytechnic Institute in Tomsk, where I had begun my career as a professor in science, proved of no avail.

Finally I gave up trying to secure work along lines of scientific research and teaching and went into an aniline dye factory as simply a chief chemist. Tremendously relieved in mind, I began to work, but my enthusiasm led me into a great tactical error. Observing that the chemical processes in use in the factory were in part faulty, I proposed to the owner certain changes and improvements. Though he was very much pleased and expressed his approval in an immediate increase of my salary, the matter brought me into a little more prominence with the workmen and led to my identification by one of the men, who was acting as a spy for the political police. After he reported to them that there was a suspicious foreman in the factory who knew too much, the officials investigated and some days later ordered my expulsion from the place.

It became evident that my punishment was not ended with the release from prison. Again I was out of work and again I tramped the whole city in search of a position, but all in vain. Fortunately Professor Zaleski was continuing his efforts for me and learned that a factory for asphalt and roof-coverings in Kieff was looking for a chemist

who could not only direct the technical operations but could also work out some inventions, which were needed in their processes.

As I had not sufficient money to make the necessary journey to Kieff, I finally decided to part with my arms after all the years of companionship and service, and with the proceeds from their sale started off to the south.

At the very outset the owner of the factory made a bad impression on me and really displeased me; but, as I had to have work, I disregarded his face, signed an agreement and started in. My first problem was to find some combination of asphalt and coal tar that would be fireproof and as elastic as rubber and that would consequently make a good medium with which to impregnate the roofing paper and insulating material for electric wiring conduits and the like.

I worked as hard as I could for a month and finally succeeded in developing the needed combination, which I called "*Aflamite*," as it was fire-proof. I remember returning that night to my quarters contented and happy over the thought that I was to receive a bonus of five thousand roubles and ten per cent. of the production profits in addition to my usual salary. In celebration I went that evening to hear Boito's "*Mephisto*" at the opera and, as I turned in later, dreamed how I should on the morrow show my invention to my employer. I felt then that I should be also able to say to myself that I was at last back on the sure path of honest, scientific work.

Immediately after breakfast the next morning I went to my laboratory to take my notes, report, statement of cost and samples to the owner; but instead of a simple and easy crowning of my efforts, I was met with a catastrophe, a real and tragic catastrophe for me in those times and circumstances. The lock of my desk was broken, and all my records and materials had disappeared. I went at once to the factory office to see the owner but

was told that he had left the previous evening for St. Petersburg and that he would not be back for a week.

When he arrived and I told him of what had happened, he smiled and said that I was a naïve and not very careful man. From his expression I understood at once that he was not naïve and careless and that it was he who had robbed me. When I told him this without equivocation, he did not take offence but simply smiled in triumph and answered :

" You have no proof of it, while I have registered the *Aflamite* in St. Petersburg. There is nothing to be done about it. This is the struggle for existence."

My first wave of impulse was to try on this crass thief the strength of my muscles, which are also at times weapons in the struggle for existence ; but, as I was just on the point of doing so, I saw before me, like a spectre, the dark prison building and within its walls the figures of those who had been chuted into the stone bags because they followed, without thinking or weighing the consequences, their first impulses of indignation and revenge. I shuddered at the picture and slackened the tension of my muscles and fists. I looked straight into the cold, shameless eyes of the man who had stolen the products of my mind—I looked steadily and for so long a time that he was troubled ; and then without changing my gaze, I said distinctly :

" You are a common thief. You have wronged a man who has done no evil to you or to any of his kind and who has passed through long months of torture and prison. You knew of all this and took advantage of it, certain that I could not secure justice before the law ; but God, the Impartial Judge, will not pardon you. I see in my mind's eye that, before a year is ended, you will die and go before His Tribunal."

I turned and went out, so disappointed and disgusted at the man that I did not even call for the rest of my salary. I hired a room in a cheap hotel and began once more the search for employment. Throughout the fol-

lowing days I visited various industrial plants and sugar factories in South Russia, offering my services as a chemist, but everywhere my revolutionary past blocked the way for me. Then one day a police official came to me with this encouraging bit of information :

" Your former employer, the owner of the asphalt factory, has notified us that you were a political prisoner. If you had a stable occupation, we could wink at your remaining in Kieff ; but, inasmuch as you have no employment, the Governor wants you to know that you will be given twenty-four hours in which to leave Kieff and that, if you are not away within this time, you will be returned to St. Petersburg in a convict car for reference to the authorities there."

That same night I left Kieff in a depressed and despondent state of mind, as I was very near to the bottom of my treasure chest. I needed no bookkeeping to tell me this, for, after I had paid the inn account and bought my ticket to St. Petersburg, I had only seven roubles left.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE FETTERS CUT

A GAIN I went to Professor Zaleski. Human nature is very strange. When I lived with Professor Zaleski before, I was always invited by him to luncheon and dinner and accepted his invitations without scruple, as I knew that I was able to extend the same courtesies to my old friend and patron. But after my return from Kieff, with very little hope of improving my situation and almost destitute,—as those seven roubles were not sufficient capital to insure me against the morrow,—I became very touchy and felt that I was then a burden for Zaleski, an intruder into his quiet home; that I was exploiting him and that to accept his hospitality under these circumstances was shameless and unwarrantable.

Consequently I changed my whole mode of living. I never have been what one would call rich, yet I have always possessed enough to permit me to lead the life of a cultured man, as I have worked since I was twelve years old and, therefore, both know how to work and am inured to it. But, after the blot of this prison term on my existence, I found the tools of life knocked from my hands and myself left weak, without the ability to help by my own conscientious effort. It was the revenge of the Tsar's Government and the pusillanimity of those who could have helped me by giving me work but who were afraid of the police that killed the hope in me.

I had seven roubles and must watch every kopeck, and I wanted to accept nothing from Zaleski. I quitted the house in the morning while the Professor was still asleep

and left a card with the servant, telling him that I should not be back for luncheon or dinner. I tramped from one factory to another, then from one office to another, but nowhere was there any work for me. I did not write to my mother, as I did not wish to give her pain or thoughts that would rob her of her peace. I dined in a far from *premier rang* restaurant, where my meal cost me fifteen kopecks (seven and a half cents). When I returned home in the evening, I always put on a bold face and appeared as care-free and cheerful as I could before the Professor.

One evening I happened to have come in before he had arrived, but in a very few minutes he burst into the hall and began calling me. I ran to him and was struck by the picture of the waving white locks and the over-excited eyes of my usually calm old patron.

"Read, read!" he almost shouted, as he handed me the evening paper.

He pointed out to me an item in the column of city accidents, which he had underscored with red. There was the news that my former employer, the owner of the asphalt factory, while driving through the Nevsky Prospect, had been seized with a fit of apoplexy and had died immediately afterwards.

"You're a sorcerer!" exclaimed Zaleski, as I finished reading. "You foretold death for him, and he seemed in a great hurry to verify your prophecy."

But this did not alter at all my material state, and I found myself wandering through the town the following morning quite as usual and dreaming about a dinner for fifteen kopecks. An incident occurred on this particular day which dealt a new blow to my suffering and ever increasingly hopeless soul. I happened upon two acquaintances in the street who pretended not to have recognized me. However, when I went up to them, one of them warned me:

"Don't stop and speak with us! Such a persecution has been organized by the police for those who have any

intercourse with political prisoners or the anti-Government leaders that to be caught talking with you or to acknowledge acquaintance with you can bring us into serious trouble. We are very sorry, but you realize that we must think of ourselves and of our families." And with this they hurried away without looking behind.

Then it is a fact! I am as one tainted or as a leper. Men are afraid of me. And, allied by such thoughts as these, despair took a still stronger hold on my soul. I saw only misery before me. Who would give me work under such systematized persecution by the police? It seemed as though an unscaleable wall had been set across my path of life.

That evening, while I was scanning the newspapers in the study of Professor Zaleski, I saw an advertisement to the effect that a certain Mr. Rass was starting a newspaper and desired some additional assistants on his staff. The idea at once struck me of going and offering the services of my pen. Without losing any time, I got up and went at once.

In the editorial rooms I was met by a stout, witty, very self-possessed, good-fellow sort of an individual.

"Oh, I have heard about you!" he gave me in welcome. Feeling rather confident that he greeted everyone in the same way, I did not stop to discuss his knowledge of my career, which was rather oppressing me by its insistent intrusion into my affairs, but turned at once to take up matters of business.

"Write me something gay and satirical, as I, who can always spot my man, perceive that you are a very humorous character," came from the editor between the puffs of his cigar.

"Very well, and when am I to bring it to you?"

"To-morrow afternoon at two. I shall pay you on Monday, as the first number of my newspaper, called *Dawn*, will appear on all the news stands on Sunday. Oh, I shall make quite a change in the journalism of

to-day, quite a change, I assure you ; for I have a very unusual staff, quite exceptional in fact."

Until late in the night I wrote a gay, satirical feuilleton. Through it I laughed at everything ; consequently I laughed at my hunger, my despair, my disenchantment ; about the pusillanimity and the baseness in men ; about fortunate and unfortunate ones ; about life and even about death. Only a man who was really hungry could have written in such a careless and flippant manner.

The editor was enchanted—but I had two days to wait for my pay and only forty kopecks left as working capital to finance my operations of life for the interim.

Finally Monday came and I hurried to the editorial rooms of *Dawn* little behind its diurnal namesake. The door was open, and the janitor was sweeping papers out of the rooms, from which all the furniture had disappeared.

"Where is Mr. Rass ?" I queried, feeling my legs giving way underneath me.

"He went away without paying us a kopeck," the man answered with a curse.

I wandered out into the street and began inquiring among the news-dealers about this weekly *Dawn*, which was to have made such a change in the journalistic literature of the capital. Nobody seemed to have heard anything about it, and only later I learned that Rass had received a licence to publish a weekly, had collected money for advertisements and had disappeared, leaving behind him a heap of manuscripts among which was one entitled "Gay Thoughts Upon Sad Matters."

This event was the last straw. For two days I ate nothing, spent all the time in the parks, thinking about nothing, dreaming about nothing ; and, if I was conscious of a thought, I would hear myself repeating :

"Now I understand you ! Now I understand !"

It was clear that my thoughts swung continuously back to the prison and were picturing those whom life, in merci-

less disregard, had pushed to the final fall, when their thoughts and wishes were dominated by hunger, hate and revenge.

At the close of these involuntary fast days I went back to the Professor's house late in the evening after he was asleep. On the third day I rose as usual and went to the park, where I sat on a bench and looked straight ahead of me without purpose or feeling. Carts, carriages and motors rolled by; crowds of people streamed along in front of me; laughter, gay conversation, church bells and the warble of birds mingled with thousands of others to make up the world of meaningless sounds. I understood clearly that all this was not for me, that I must look upon it as out of another world. The shadow of Druzenin passed before my eyes and, in spite of myself, I envied him for having broken the chain that bound him to the galling ball of life.

Near me on the bench was a young man, light-hearted and laughing, and with him a girl with happy, sparkling eyes. I again had the distinct impression of being in another world, strange to all those who surrounded me. I felt that they certainly did not see me, that I was, as it were, an imperceptible shadow.

"*You will endure everything, my son,*" suddenly floated in to me, as though across the thin ether from that other world in which I had once known a mother.

Involuntarily I smiled and said aloud :

"Mother, do you see, I cannot endure, I cannot !"

"What did you say ?" asked the young man, looking at me with astonishment.

With difficulty I got up and wandered off, without any aim and without conscious thought. I had no idea where I was going or how long I had been walking away from the answer to that question, and only a puff of unusually cold air brought me to myself again.

I looked around and found myself on a bridge crossing the Neva. I stopped and leaned over the railing.

Already the sun had dropped below the horizon, which one never sees in the big towns, and darkness began to crawl out from all the alleyways and the river ends of passages and drains. I felt a disagreeable gnawing of hunger in my stomach and a terrible void in my breast. I felt as though I had no heart or lungs in my chest, only the void left by the consuming ravages of despair.

And then through the railings I saw the river, deep and swift, flowing in mad, angry swirls of protest at being confined by granite walls and split by piers of stone, speeding down to gain the freedom of the sea. Lashing the bridge pillars with loud and foaming splashes, madly it beat against the stones and retreated in whirlpools of foam and a chaos of baffled movement.

Under its influence decision sprang up within me, dictating the last violent act that should relieve me of all pain and suffering, of my hopeless strife against the dominating power that built these bridges and forged chains around subject peoples as unbreakable as these foundations of stone, that always faced and baffled the futile efforts of the stream.

I had raised one foot to the rail to bend back and jump into the water. In my mind was the thought that the swirling current would catch me and carry me underneath the bridge and down the hundred yards to a group of anchored barges, loaded with logs and planks, where I would be quickly sucked down beneath the hulls and into the network of anchors and chains and be freed from all my physical and mental strife.

Another moment and I should have been in the water, but just at that instant I was held by a piercing cry that came from directly behind me. I shuddered and looked around, to see a man, poorly clad and desperate with despair, climb abruptly over the bridge rail and jump into the water. Without even stopping to look for him, I ran across to the down-stream side of the bridge, where there was some life-saving apparatus, and began throwing

into the stream some big cork balls and a life ring that hung beside them.

Once I had these overboard, I looked down and saw the man floating along, helplessly and frantically waving his arms, whenever he came to the surface, and shouting the frightened appeals of a despairing drowning man. In a second he caught sight of the life ring just a few yards below him and struggled, with awkward, unskilled movements, to try to keep himself afloat until he could reach it. At the same time a lifeboat of the river police shot out from down below, in response to the cries of the guard on the bridge, and shortly pulled him out, pale, trembling and dumb with fright.

When the boat came ashore, I went down and looked into the eyes of the rescued man. He seemed then very close to me, as we had stood together in the face of death and he had essayed the contest first. I was astonished, as I read in his eyes such a wish for life and such a joy that I had the impression I even heard his triumphal cry on his return to men, to the movement of the world and to the struggle for existence.

I felt no more hunger or despair. I had no idea yet as to what I was to do or what was to become of me; but I seemed sure that God would not allow me to perish, as He had not permitted this second unfortunate being to end his life in a moment of despondency and gloom.

I left the bridge and went back in the direction of the park. There in front of me was an electric sign, intermittently flashing the words "Coillou's Cigarette Tubes." Hardly conscious of what I was doing, I read the address of the factory and went all the way across to the other end of the town to search it out. The factory office was already closed, but I succeeded in convincing the gate-man that I must see the manager at once to talk with him about an urgent matter. In a few minutes I was standing in the administration office before a red-haired, pale and sallow man, sitting behind a big desk.

"What do you want?"

"Am I speaking to the manager?"

"Yes," he answered, surveying me attentively.

"I beg your pardon for coming to you out of office hours, but I am forced to do it, as I want work."

"We have no vacancy," he grunted. "And, besides, why did you come to us? Are you a specialist in this sort of manufacturing?"

"I don't know why, but something dictated to me that I come here," I answered and then told him about my former life and my present straights.

"Unfortunately we have no work for a chemist," he finally said as a regretful ultimatum.

"I beg your pardon for having disturbed you," I half whispered and rose to go out, when the manager stopped me with the words:

"Please wait a moment. I shall return at once."

Almost immediately he did come back with a second gentleman, who turned out to be the owner of the factory.

"My chief wants to make a proposal to you for a piece of work to be undertaken at your own risk. Do you understand?"

"What is it?" I asked with something between enthusiasm and despair.

"A firm, which is competing with ours, makes cigarette tubes with a cotton insert that absorbs the nicotine. How they prepare this cotton is their secret. If you could develop something similar, we should at once pay you five hundred roubles and should give you one thousand roubles annually for a period of ten years. What do you think? But I repeat once more that all the laboratory expenses are for your account, whether you succeed or not."

After finishing his sentence, the manager looked at me with questioning eyes and wondered evidently whether I had any experience to go on. I realized at once what cotton was needed for absorbing the poisonous alkaloid

of nicotine and already saw myself completing the experiment and earning food.

"I have every reason to believe the work will be successful," was my verbal answer; whereas my actions hardly supported my declaration, as I suddenly felt an irresistible dizziness coming over me and fell, almost fainting, into the chair behind me.

"What's the matter? What ails you?" asked the frightened manufacturers, as they chafed my hands and gave me water.

"I felt faint."

"Are you ill?" the manager asked.

"I am hungry," was the unwilling answer which my pride permitted my sincerity to release.

These two manufacturers were generous and noble men, whose names I cannot refrain from giving, as I feel that I owe to them so much more than they ever realized from my ordinary expressions of gratitude during the days we worked together. One was Mr. Francis Coillou, the other Mr. M. A. Shapliguin.

For three days they fed me and cared for me, all in a most delicate manner, as I would not accept money from them. I had gone right to work in Professor Zaleski's laboratory on my experiments. My theoretical assumptions proved correct in practice, as I developed a cotton that absorbed twenty-five per cent. of nicotine. I asked Professor Zaleski to check my results and give me a certificate of his findings. As his examination of my compound verified my own claims, I was that same day armed with his regular professional statement and, after having given my cotton a nice pink hue, I took it at once along to the factory.

When the Municipal Chemical Laboratory tested my samples, they reported that it absorbed thirty per cent. of the nicotine, which was ten per cent. more than the amount retained by the cotton of the rival firm. On the following day I was already a rich man, for the firm

immediately paid me the five hundred rouble bonus and another five hundred as a half of the first year's royalty, which not only made me sure about the morrow but of many to-morrows and gave me the necessary opportunity to look around and seek for a stable and satisfactory means of livelihood.

Out of those indescribably trying and soul-searching days, when the whole weight of the Tsar's machine seemed bent upon crushing the life out of me, two glaringly significant and incongruous facts burned themselves into my memory and my soul. The first was that, try as all the previously proud strength of my mind and body could, I had not been able "to endure" and to respond to that voice of my mother which floated in to me, as I sat in hunger and despair on the park bench. The second was that Chance should have taken the credit of accomplishing that which all my physical, mental and spiritual effort could not effect, and that two men, of whose existence I did not previously even know, and a handful of pink cotton should have proved themselves able to change the whole course of my life.

It seemed as though some Power, not within myself and greater far, were seeking to give me a final lesson of sympathy and understanding for the other atoms of Human Dust to whom Chance had not come with a ball of pink cotton and who were not one whit weaker than I had proved myself to be.

Often afterwards, when working in the laboratory or at my desk, I thought that the most thrilling and trying experiences of life were already behind me.

I did not dream then that I should one day come face to face with beasts, men and gods, who were to embody all the extreme and incredible passions and powers of the mundane universe; that I should again have to wander through the marshes and meshes of Oriental lands and strange events. I had no thought that it would be ordained that I should be immersed and swept on in

the wildest maelstrom of modern madness and perverted psychic impulses ; and that, from right out of the centre of millions of perishing men, I should be filched from the struggling mass by a whirling eddy of Chance and be thrown up on the shore such as I am, sound in mind and body, not afraid to fight and possessed of the strong conviction that

Life is the beautiful gift of Almighty God.



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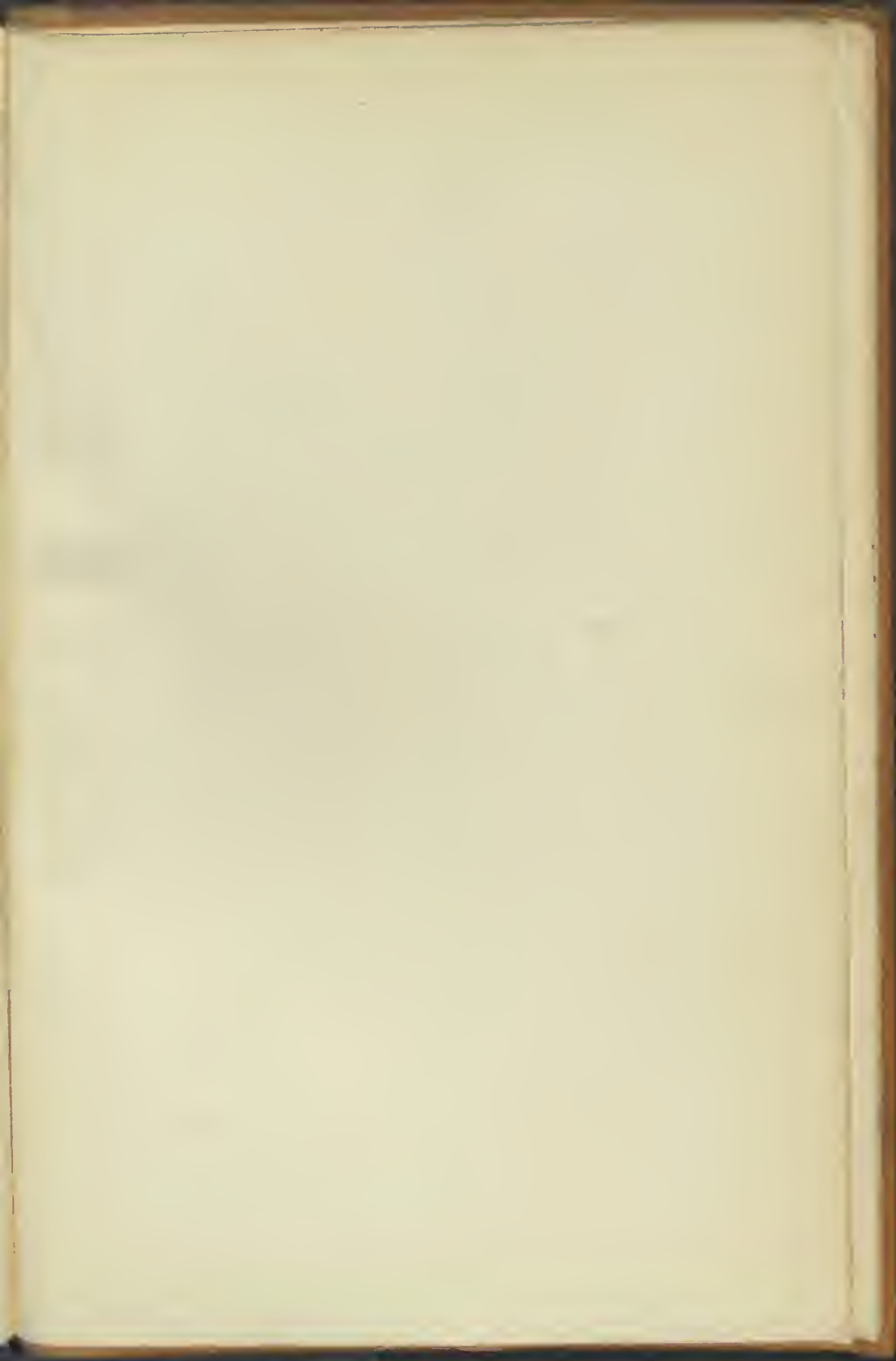
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